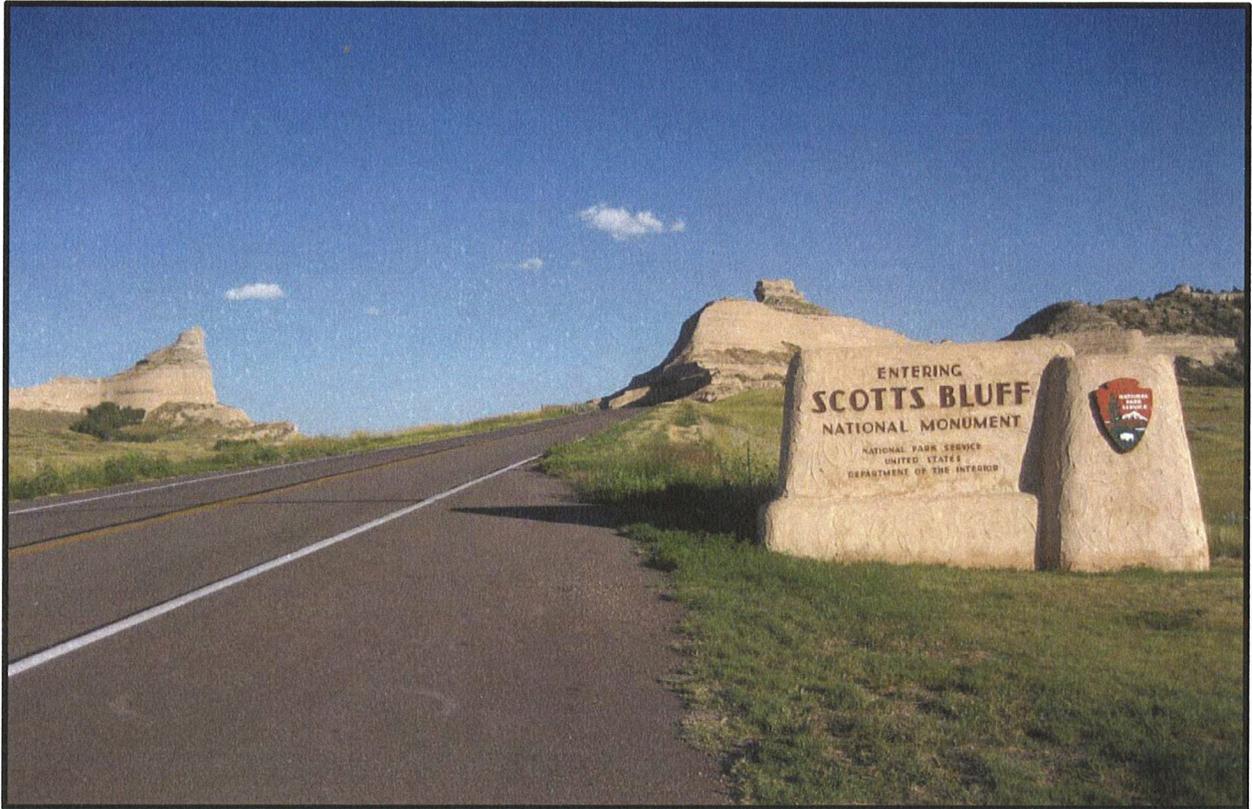


# “A Nebraska Gibraltar”

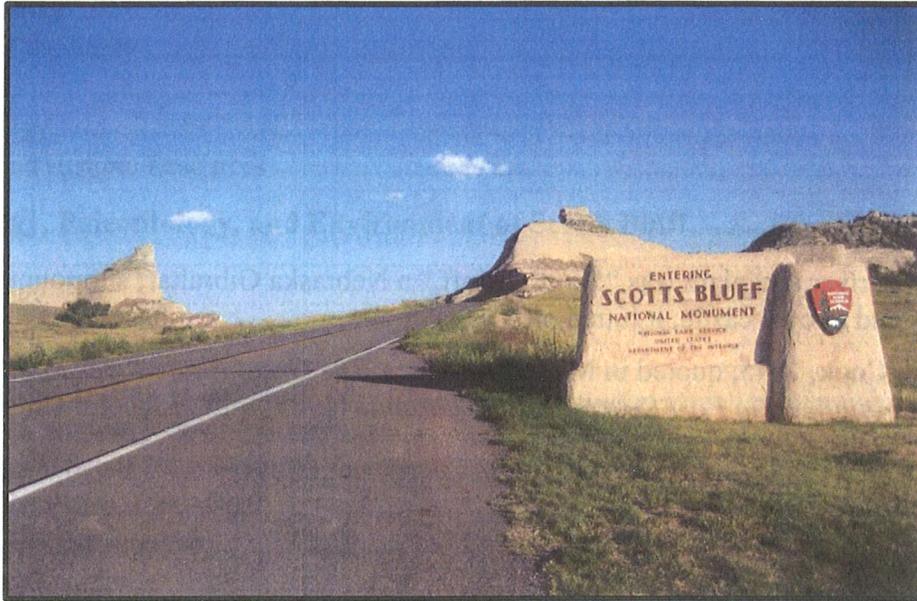
Historic Resource Study, Scotts Bluff National Monument, Nebraska



Emily Greenwald, Ph.D.  
2012

# "A Nebraska Gibraltar"

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Emily Greenwald, Ph.D.  
2012

Recommended:

*Ken Mabery*

Superintendent, Scotts Bluff National Monument

*10-16-2012*

Date

Concurred:

*Agnes E. Adams*

Associate Regional Director, Cultural Resources

*10.24.12*

Date

Approved:

*Michael H. Reynolds*

Regional Director, Midwest Region

*10-31-12*

Date

Looming afar over river and plain was “Scott’s Bluff,” a Nebraska Gibraltar; surmounted by a colossal fortress and a royal castle, it jutted on the water . . .

Philip St. George Cook, 1845, quoted in Merrill J. Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road: The Covered Wagon Mainline Via Fort Kearny to Fort Laramie* (1969; rptd., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 423.

Cover Photo: Emily Greenwald, 2010.

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## Acknowledgments

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We wish to thank the Superintendent Ken Mabery and the staff at Scotts Bluff National Monument for their help and hospitality during the course of this project. In particular, Robert Manasek, Resources Specialist, provided extensive information, gave us access to historical records and recent reports, and showed us inholdings and other notable features within the monument's boundaries.

Senior Historian Ron Cockrell at the NPS Midwest Regional Office (MWRO) served as the Contracting Officer's Representative for this project, and it was a pleasure to work under his direction. Ron headed an MWRO team that reviewed and commented on an earlier version of this study. We appreciate the time that went into the review and the corrections and suggestions that came out of it.

Archeologist Anne Vawser of the NPS Midwest Archeological Center provided up-to-date information about archeological sites at Scotts Bluff, along with reports that helped us fill gaps in this study and the National Register nomination update.

Archivists and other staff at the North Platte Valley Museum, the Nebraska State Historical Society, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln libraries, and the National Archives and Records Administration-Great Plains Region helped us understand and make good use of their collections.

In our own offices, we benefited from Pam Cobb's report production expertise, Gabe Frazier's cartographic skills, and Dawn Vogel's editorial eye.

# Introduction

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## Project Setting

Scotts Bluff, a remnant of the ancient high plains, rises roughly 800 feet above the floor of the North Platte Valley near the western edge of Nebraska. A short stretch of badlands just north of the bluff separates it from the North Platte River, a wide and braided waterway that flows east to join the South Platte River near present-day North Platte, Nebraska. There, the two rivers form the Platte River, which ultimately empties into the Missouri. A natural gap known as Mitchell Pass lies between Scotts Bluff and South Bluff, the slightly taller feature immediately to the south. The bluffs are part of a longer chain of geological formations that parallel the river, known today as the Wildcat Hills.

Scotts Bluff was named after Hiram Scott, a fur trader who died on an 1828 journey eastward out of the Rockies. His remains were found near the bluffs in 1829, but the circumstances of his death remain a mystery.<sup>1</sup> The name Scotts Bluff first appeared in print in 1837, and the first-known use of it on a published map was in 1840.<sup>2</sup> During the period of overland migration (1840s–1860s), travelers generally used the term “Scott’s Bluffs” (in the plural) to refer to the chain of formations extending west from the most prominent bluff and including the Wildcat Hills.<sup>3</sup> A document titled “Recommended Nomenclature for Scotts Bluff National Monument,” which appears to be from the 1940s, advised using the name “Scotts Bluff” to refer to the main bluff of the monument only. It recommended that the bluff across the highway to the south be designated “South Bluff,” a name that the National Park Service (NPS) had used informally. The document explained that South Bluff was a “separate and distinct geographical feature” that stood 43 feet taller than Scotts Bluff.<sup>4</sup>

Archeological evidence indicates that indigenous people were present in the area as long as 10,000 years ago. Signs of their activities have been found on and around Scotts Bluff, including at the summit. They may have been predecessors of Apache people who ultimately migrated to the south, or they may have been Woodlands people. Perhaps as early as the 1500s, the Pawnee Indians of the Loup River region used the area for bison hunting. By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, horse-mounted tribes, including the Lakota (Teton Sioux), Cheyenne, and Arapaho expanded from the north into the region, also seeking bison.

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<sup>1</sup> Donald Brand compiled various accounts of Scott’s death in his 1934 history of Scotts Bluff. See Donald D. Brand, *The History of Scotts Bluff Nebraska* (Berkeley, CA: National Park Service, Field Division of Education, 1934), 18–23.

<sup>2</sup> Merrill J. Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, Historical Handbook Series, No. 28 (1958; rptd., Washington, DC: National Park Service 1961), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 26; “Recommended Nomenclature for Scotts Bluff National Monument to Be Submitted to the U.S. Board of Geographical Names,” n.d., 1, File: SCBL-2, List of Classified Structures/Cultural Landscapes Inventory, Cultural Resources, National Park Service-Midwest Regional Office, Omaha, Nebraska [NPS-MWRO].

<sup>4</sup> “Recommended Nomenclature for Scotts Bluff National Monument,” 2, 4.

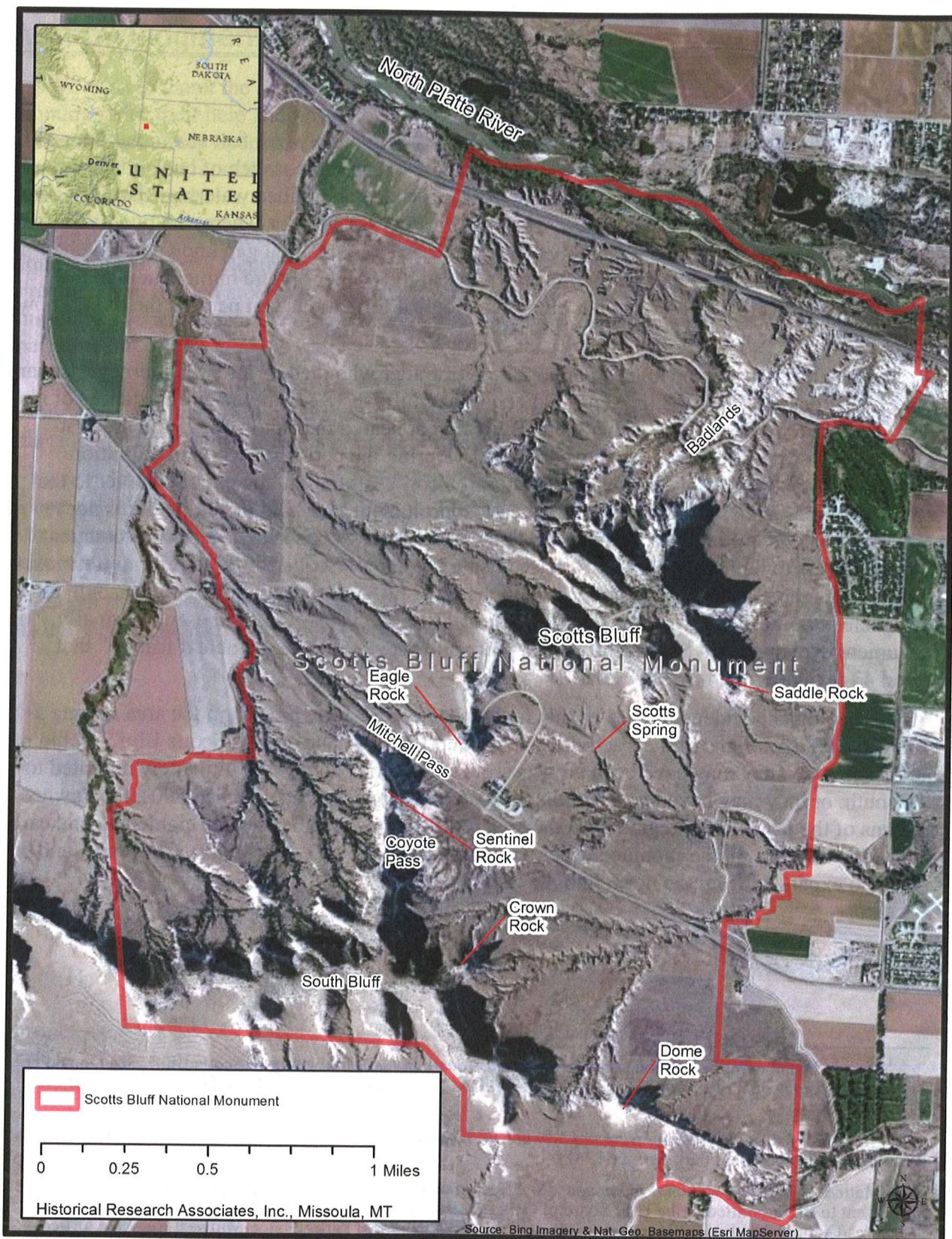


Figure 0.1: Scotts Bluff National Monument.

In the nineteenth century, approximately half a million Euro-Americans traveled up the Platte and North Platte on their way to Oregon, Utah, and California. Travelers on the south side left the river's banks when they reached Scotts Bluff because the local badlands blocked their path. For many years, they veered about 8 miles south to Robidoux Pass, but in 1851, they began using the gap between Scotts Bluff and South Bluff, which later became known as Mitchell Pass.<sup>5</sup> The Oregon Trail, as the route is generally known, is still visible near the base of Scotts Bluff, where thousands of wagons etched deep ruts into the sandstone.

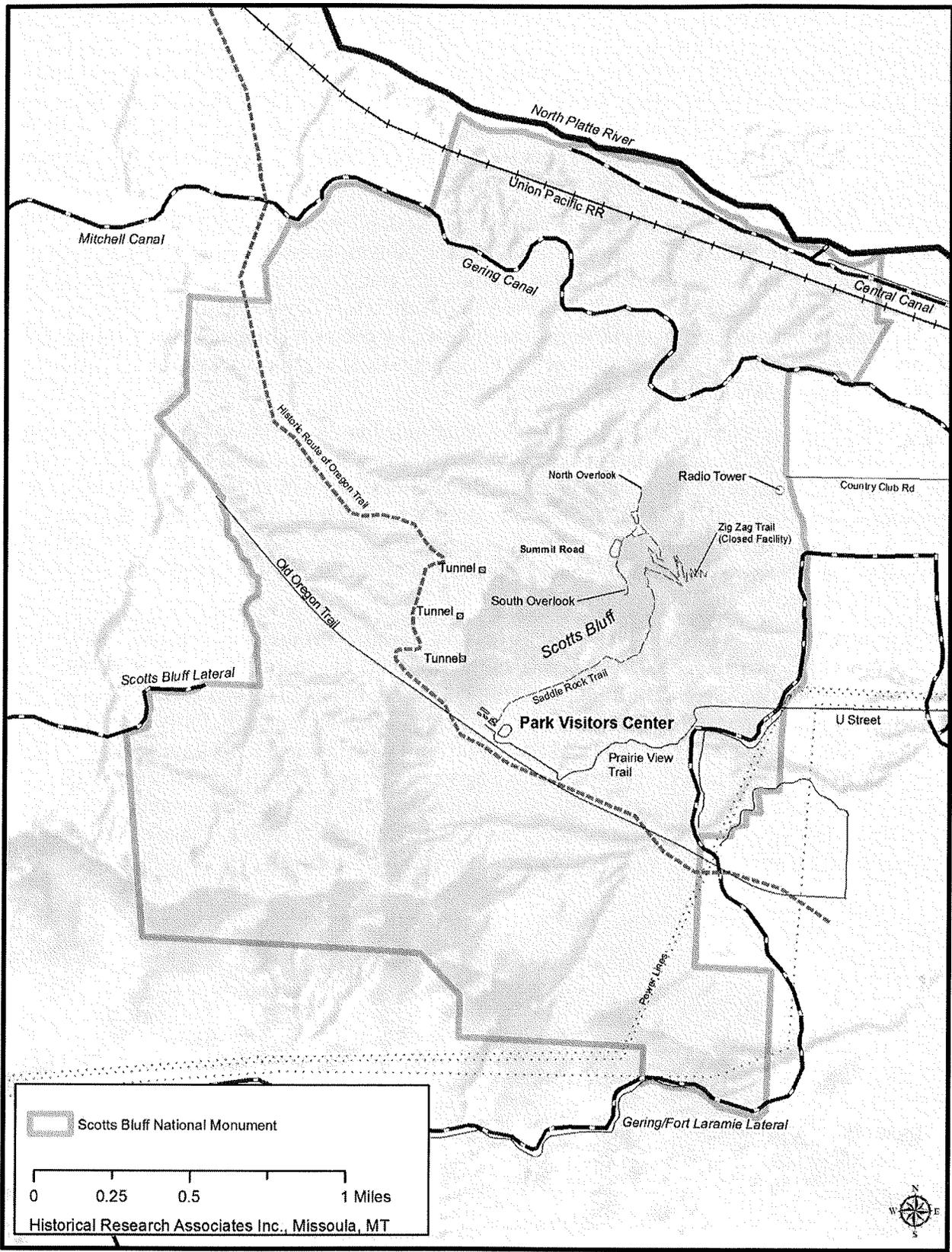
The combined pressure of American Indians and overland travelers significantly altered environmental conditions. They stripped the landscape of trees, damaged the grasses, and pushed bison out of the Platte River corridor. Overland travelers could withstand the changes because they were only passing through the region. As trail infrastructure developed, they could obtain needed supplies along the route. The American Indians, by contrast, struggled to survive as their resource base fell apart. They were compelled to cede land and to relocate to present-day South Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, and Oklahoma.

The demand for supplies and mail in the far West added to the traffic on the Oregon Trail in the 1850s and 1860s. Stagecoaches and ox-drawn freight wagons bore most of the burden. The short-lived Pony Express mail service used the Mitchell Pass route in 1860–1861, with stations located 12 miles east and 2 miles west of Scotts Bluff. The first transcontinental telegraph also went through Mitchell Pass. In 1869, the completion of the transcontinental railroad—which passed near the Nebraska-Colorado boundary instead of along the North Platte—ended most wagon and stagecoach travel on the trail.

During the 1870s, the North Platte Valley began a transition from a place people passed through to a place where people lived permanently. Ranchers began grazing cattle on public lands in the vicinity of Scotts Bluff in the 1870s. They were followed by homesteaders who fenced off now-private land in the late 1880s, causing a decline in ranching. Early settlers founded the towns of Gering in 1887 and Scottsbluff in 1899. Through irrigation, settlers transformed the region into a highly productive agricultural zone, known primarily for sugar beets. Labor demands for sugar beet cultivation and processing drew in immigrant groups such as Japanese, Mexican, and Germans who formerly lived in Imperial Russia. Canals constructed for irrigation are still present within the current monument boundaries.

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<sup>5</sup> Both Robidoux Pass and Mitchell Pass were called "Scotts Bluff Pass" in the past. The name Mitchell Pass came into use after the establishment of Fort Mitchell in 1864, but it did not appear on a map until 1895. "Recommended Nomenclature for Scotts Bluff National Monument," 3-4.



**Figure 0.2:** Scotts Bluff National Monument, Present Conditions.

In the 1910s, local businesspeople began promoting the creation of a national park or monument at Scotts Bluff to commemorate the Oregon Trail history and to attract tourists. Their efforts paid off in 1919, when President Woodrow Wilson established Scotts Bluff National Monument under the provisions of the 1906 American Antiquities Act. The local community developed some park facilities in the 1920s, but the first and most significant building campaign did not occur until the 1930s. Through New Deal public works projects and labor relief programs (particularly the Civilian Conservation Corps [CCC]), the NPS built a road to the summit, a museum and visitor center, a ranger's residence, trails, and other infrastructure. The NPS designed the buildings according to the "rustic" style that prevailed in park landscape architecture at the time. They are Spanish Eclectic in their elements, but they resonate with the sod house vernacular architecture from Nebraska's homestead era and blend into the landscape.

Additional construction occurred in the 1940s, including a new museum wing to house the art work of William Henry Jackson. In the 1940s, the NPS also began to remove nonconforming facilities from the monument. Scotts Bluff gained another ranger's residence and an amphitheater in 1958–1959, during the MISSION 66 program. Although MISSION 66 emphasized modernist architecture, the new Scotts Bluff structures harmonized with the existing stucco-clad Spanish style. Little construction has occurred since the 1960s, but the existing infrastructure has been altered over time to accommodate administrative and visitor needs.

## Purpose of the Study

The NPS describes a Historic Resource Study as follows:

A historic resource study (HRS) provides a historical overview of a park or region and identifies and evaluates a park's cultural resources within historic contexts. It synthesizes all available cultural resource information from all disciplines in a narrative designed to serve managers, planners, interpreters, cultural resource specialists, and interested public as a reference for the history of the region and the resources within a park. Entailing both documentary research and field investigations to determine and describe the integrity, authenticity, associative values, and significance of resources, the HRS supplies data for resource management and interpretation. It includes the preparation of National Register nominations for all qualifying resources and is a principal tool for completing the Cultural Landscapes Inventory and the List of Classified Structures. The HRS identifies needs for special history studies, cultural landscape reports, and other detailed studies and may make recommendations for resource management and interpretation.<sup>6</sup>

The NPS hired Historical Research Associates, Inc. (HRA), in 2010 to conduct an HRS for Scotts Bluff National Monument and to update the monument's National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) nomination. The monument was first listed on the National Register in 1966. A full nomination was approved in 1978, emphasizing the geological, archeological, and nineteenth-century historical significance of Scotts Bluff. At that point in time, the Summit Road and initial park buildings were not old enough to be eligible for the NRHP. The NPS drafted an update in the early 1990s, after the Depression-era structures became eligible, but it was not carried through to listing.

HRA prepared a fully updated nomination for Scotts Bluff as a historic district, identifying a period of significance from prehistory to 1959 (see Appendix). The broad time frame

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<sup>6</sup> National Park Service, *NPS-28: Cultural Resource Management Guideline*, effective June 11, 1998, [http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online\\_books/nps28/28chap2.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/nps28/28chap2.htm).

encompasses the archeological resources found within monument boundaries, the nineteenth-century resources associated with overland emigration, and the structures built under NPS management between 1933 and 1959. The latter date marks the end of the MISSION 66 building campaign at the monument. Some new construction and modifications have been carried out since 1959, but they are not considered eligible for the National Register at this time.

The report that follows begins with an overview of the geological, archeological, and prehistoric significance of Scotts Bluff National Monument. It then examines the period from 1812 to 1959, providing detailed context for the historical resources within the monument's boundaries. A number of studies relevant to the monument's history have already been completed, some of which are specific to Scotts Bluff (such as a recent study of trail ruts), while others address the broader trail system (such as a Pony Express study). HRA has provided suggestions for additional studies at the end of this report.

Scotts Bluff National Monument recently went through a long-range interpretive planning process.<sup>7</sup> Through a cooperative agreement between the NPS and the Organization of American Historians, three scholars visited the monument and reviewed the interpretive plan. This HRS seeks to assist the implementation of the plan by providing additional information that can be used in interpretation.

## Personnel

Emily Greenwald headed HRA's team as principal investigator and project manager. She holds a Ph.D. in American history from Yale University. Natalie K. Perrin, who earned an M.S. in historic preservation from the University of Oregon, prepared the National Register nomination and contributed to the HRS. Joshua Pollarine wrote several sections of the HRS. He received his M.A. in American history from the University of Montana. Other HRA historians contributing to the project were Lynette Scriver-Colburn, M.A.; Emily Robideau, M.A.; Bradley J. Gills, Ph.D.; and Anthony E. Carlson, Ph.D.

## Methodology

HRA conducted research in the following locations:

- Scotts Bluff National Monument, Gering, Nebraska
- National Archives and Records Administration-Great Plains Region, Kansas City, Missouri
- Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebraska
- North Platte Valley Museum, Gering, Nebraska

Records available at Scotts Bluff (in the monument's curatorial collection and library) include historic photographs, maps, master plan documents, building plans, ephemera associated with the monument's history, and secondary literature. The collection at the National Archives in Kansas City contains NPS administrative records for the monument, covering the period from the 1930s to the 1960s. We found useful information about the monument's building campaigns in the National Archives collection. At the Nebraska State Historical Society and the North Platte Valley Museum, we focused on primary and secondary sources related to local history.

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<sup>7</sup> National Park Service, "Scotts Bluff National Monument Long-Range Interpretive Plan," June 2008.

In addition to the primary source research described above, HRA reviewed secondary literature pertaining to geology, archeology, American Indian history, the fur trade, overland emigration, and the history of Gering and Scottsbluff.<sup>8</sup> An important goal of the project was to incorporate current scholarship in these fields, and we have done our best to include relevant recent work in the report. But we found that much of the best scholarship on overland emigration and the Oregon Trail period dates from the 1940s to the 1970s.

In May 2011, HRA conducted a site inspection to identify and photograph the monument's historic resources. Natural Resources Specialist Robert Manasek took us on a tour of the monument and provided valuable information about resources beyond the monument's administrative core. We greatly appreciate the time he spent with us.

## Cultural and Historic Resources

The monument boundaries encompass a variety of resources, including geological features, archeological sites, buildings and other structures, roads and trails, signs, and various inholdings. The inventory below was compiled for HRA's update of the NRHP nomination for Scotts Bluff. It includes HRA's assessment of which resources contribute to the Scotts Bluff historic district (see Table 1). The study that follows seeks to situate these resources, whether contributing or noncontributing, in their appropriate historical and cultural contexts.

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<sup>8</sup> The city of Scottsbluff is one word, while the bluff and the county are both rendered as two words.

**Table 1: Inventory of Contributing and Noncontributing Resources**

<b>Date(s)</b>	<b>Resource Name</b>	<b>Contributing/Noncontributing</b>
<b>Geologic Features</b>		
Prehistoric	Scotts Bluff (including Eagle Rock and Saddle Rock)	Contributing Site
Prehistoric	South Bluff (including Sentinel Rock, Crown Rock, and Dome Rock)	Contributing Site
Prehistoric	The Badlands	Contributing Site
Prehistoric, 1936	Scotts Spring	Contributing Site
<b>Buildings and Structures</b>		
1990	Entrance Booth	Noncontributing Building
1935, 1938, 1948	Museum and Visitor Center	Contributing Building
1937	Comfort Station	Contributing Building
1958	Campfire Circle	Contributing Structure
1938, 1949	Ranger's Residence (now Offices)	Contributing Building
1958	Mission 66 Residence	Contributing Building
1936, 1958, 1981	Maintenance Shed	Noncontributing Building
ca. 1990	Vehicle Shed	Noncontributing Structure
2007	Picnic Shelters	Noncontributing Structures (3)
1933–1939	Summit Road	Contributing Structure
ca. 1936	Saddle Rock Trail	Contributing Structure
ca. 1936	Summit Trail and Observation Points	Contributing Structure
1933	Metal Survey Post	Contributing Object
1995	Observation Point	Noncontributing Structure
ca. 1968	Prairie View Trail	Noncontributing Structure
ca. 2010	Boundary Fences	Noncontributing Structure
<b>Signs and Memorials</b>		
1912	Granite Marker	Contributing Object
<b>Archeological Sites and Ruins (also see Table 2)</b>		
Prehistoric	Archeological Sites (40)	Contributing Sites (40)
Multi-Component	Prehistoric and Historic Archeological Sites (2)	Contributing Sites (2)
Historic	Archeological Sites (6), including,	Noncontributing Sites (3)
1800–1899	Oregon Trail	Contributing Site
ca. 1930	Zig Zag Trail	Contributing Site
1930	Hiram Scott Memorial Arch	Contributing Site
<b>Inholdings and Rights of Way</b>		
ca. 1900	Gering-Ft. Laramie Irrigation District Canal	Noncontributing Structure
ca. 1900	Gering Irrigation District Canal	Noncontributing Structure
ca. 1942	Central Irrigation District Canal	Noncontributing Structure
ca. 1910	Union Pacific Railroad	Noncontributing Structure
	Western Area Power Administration Transmission Line	Noncontributing Structure
	Roosevelt Public Power District Transmission Line	Noncontributing Structure
after 1964	Nebraska Public Power District Radio Tower	Noncontributing Structure
ca. 1932	Old Oregon Trail (former State Highway 92)	Noncontributing Structure

# 1. Geology, Paleontology, and Environment of Scotts Bluff

## Geology

The region of the United States known as the Great Plains, stretching east from the Rocky Mountains almost to the Mississippi River, was once a vast inland sea. Approximately 225 million years ago, the deeper waters of this inland sea left a base layer of limestone under the entirety of Nebraska. Periodic shifting and uplift events caused the inland sea to shrink and become shallow in places, allowing coarser sediments such as shale and sandstone to accrue. During the Jurassic period of the Mesozoic era, roughly 150 million years ago, the sea returned for a short period and then again retreated, creating climatic conditions conducive to terrestrial organisms. Fossils of more than 150 types of terrestrial fauna and flora have been found dating from this period in what is now western Nebraska.<sup>9</sup>

According to scholar William L. Effinger, the Jurassic period “was followed by a long period of non-deposition and erosion,” prior to another flooding of the plains.<sup>10</sup> Seawater lingered in the region until nearly 70 million years ago, when it gave way to shallower depths, eventually transitioning to fresh water as the seas retreated. Ultimately, the water dissipated altogether in the wake of massive “folding and thrusting” that formed the Rocky Mountains and Black Hills. Effinger explained, “[t]his great disturbance . . . known as the Larimide Revolution,” had little effect on the Great Plains, “for here the older beds still lie in almost a horizontal position.”<sup>11</sup>

During the period following the Larimide Revolution, the Plains Region began to take its current shape. Streams and seasonal floods, stemming from the Rocky Mountains to the west, carried waters and mineral deposits across the area. The subsequent deposits comprise some of the earliest geological layers found at Scotts Bluff National Monument.

The Cenozoic era began approximately 70 million years ago. The Tertiary period spanned most of the Cenozoic era, followed by the Quaternary period (the Pleistocene epoch or Ice Age). During the Tertiary period, approximately 50 million years ago, volcanoes developed to the west of the plains, contributing to the geological activity shaping the region.<sup>12</sup> Evidence of the period at Scotts Bluff is from the Oligocene and Miocene epochs, with exposed rock dating from 33 to 22 million years ago. These early layers, consisting of sandstone, shale, and conglomerate rock—including volcanic ash and debris—were the result of deposition by “streams which drained the higher land to the west.”<sup>13</sup> The rock formations from these periods comprise two distinct groups. From the Oligocene epoch, the predominant feature is the Brule Formation of the White River Group. The Miocene epoch is represented by the Arikaree Group.

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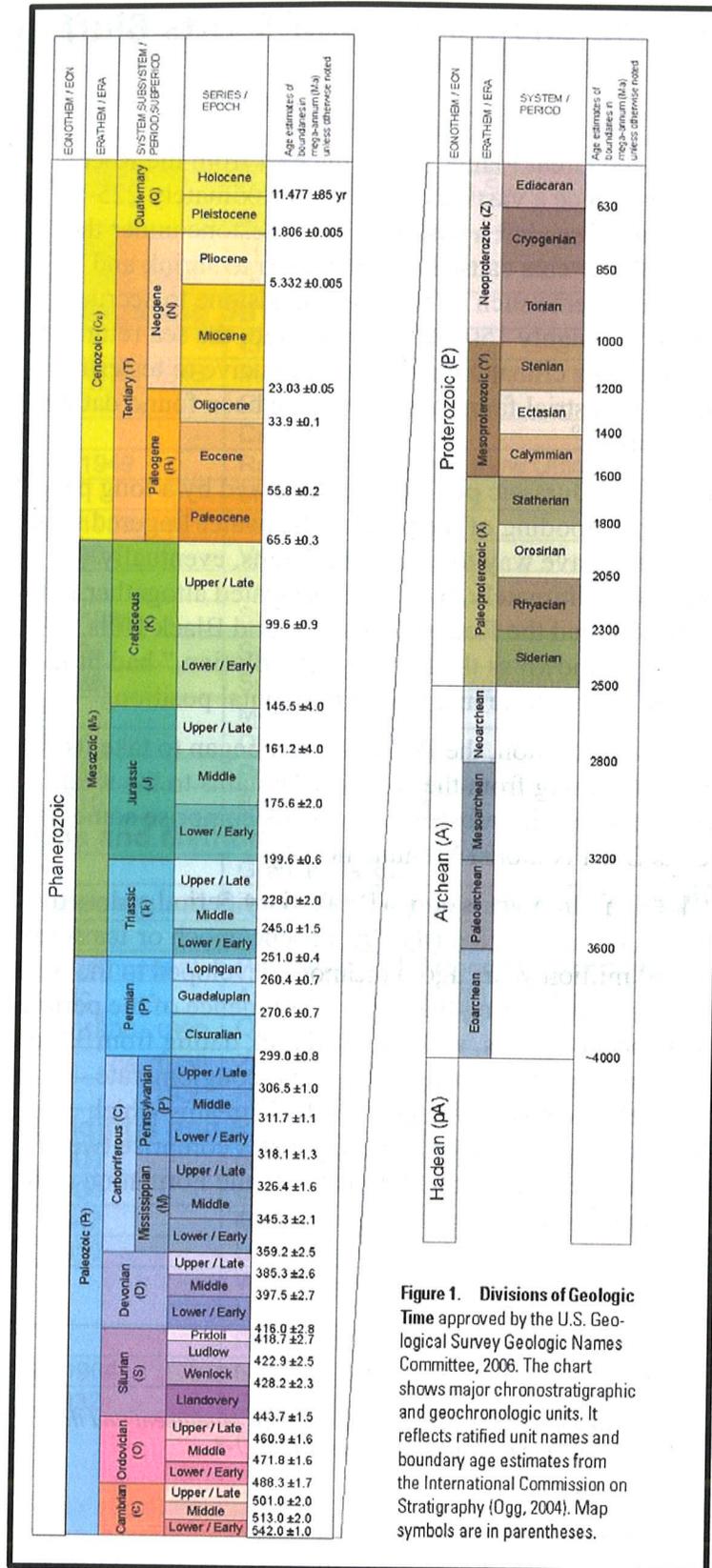
<sup>9</sup> William L. Effinger, *Outline of the Geology and Paleontology of Scotts Bluff National Monument and the Adjacent Region* (Berkeley, CA: National Park Service, Field Division of Education, 1934), 7-8.

<sup>10</sup> Effinger, *Outline of the Geology and Paleontology*, 8.

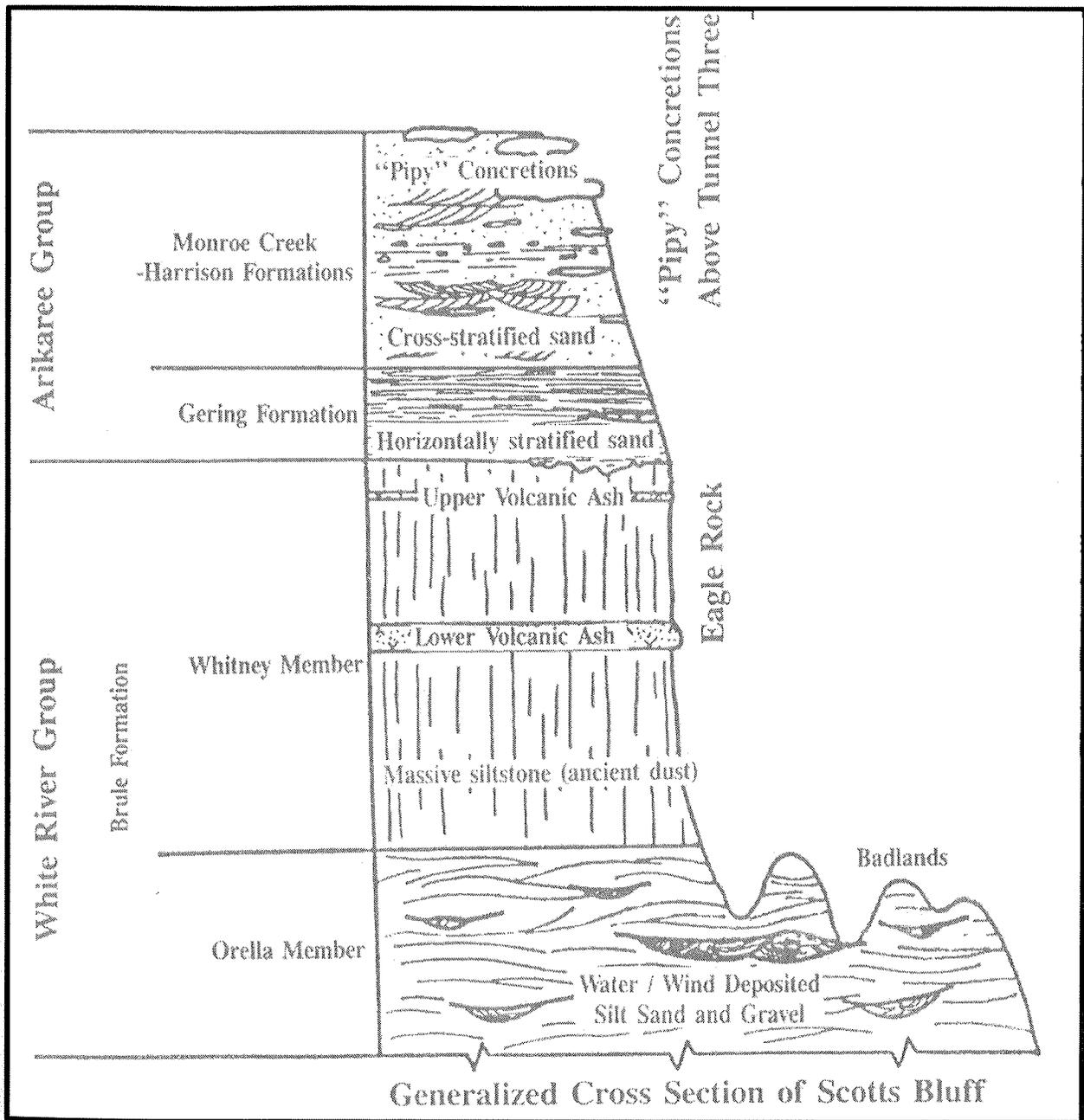
<sup>11</sup> Effinger, *Outline of the Geology and Paleontology*, 9.

<sup>12</sup> Donald E. Trimble, *The Geologic Story of the Great Plains* (Bismarck, ND: Richtman's Printing, 1980), 16.

<sup>13</sup> Effinger, *Outline of the Geology and Paleontology*, 7.



**Figure 1.1:** Divisions of Geologic Time approved by the U.S. Geological Survey Geologic Names Committee, 2006. Source: U.S. Geological Survey Geologic Names Committee, 2007, Divisions of geologic time—Major chronostratigraphic and geochronologic units: U.S. Geological Survey Fact Sheet 2007-3015, 2 p.



**Figure 1.2:** Generalized Cross Section of Scotts Bluff.

Source: Roger K. Pabian and James B. Swinehart, II, *Geologic History of Scotts Bluff National Monument* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska, 1979), 12.

Sediment deposits from the subsequent Ice Age covered these early formations. The sediments of the late Tertiary period “formed an extensive, relatively smooth, eastward-sloping plain,” which covered the landscape for 20 to 25 million years before the rate of erosion began to exceed the rate of deposition about 4 to 5 million years ago. The process of erosion created the landscape we see today.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Pabian and Swinehart, *Geologic History*, 5.

The Brule Formation provides the base for Scotts Bluff and for exposed topography in the area in general. The lower sections are primarily “interbedded sandstone and silt-stone layers,” deposited by streams that inundated ancient floodplains. The more recent material found in the Brule Formation is largely volcanic ash and glass shards carried to the Plains by the wind from large volcanic eruptions to the west.<sup>15</sup>

Toward the top of Scotts Bluff and above the Brule Formation is the Arikaree Group. The Arikaree consists chiefly of fine-grained sand, mixed with a lesser percentage of volcanic ash. Ancient rivers and streams deposited the silts across the area, with a build-up of sediments occurring along floodplains. As the water evaporated, lime from the groundwater cemented ledges of rock, resulting in pipy concretions, which partially consist of “long, irregular, cylindrical masses.”<sup>16</sup> The concretions are resistant to erosion and create a cap over softer sandstone layers. Where such caps exist, bluffs and other tall formations remain, while the surrounding sediments have long since eroded.<sup>17</sup>

## Paleontology

The fossils found in the North Platte region, and at the monument itself, date from as early as the Oligocene era—a period predominated by mammals.<sup>18</sup> The largest and most abundantly found fossilized remains, particularly in the Brule Formation, are the Titanotheres. Historian Earl Harris noted that fossil discoveries at Scotts Bluff go back at least to 1847, “when a fur trader showed the jawbone of a Titanotheres to Dr. Hiram Prout of St. Louis.”<sup>19</sup> These herbivores were comparable in size to the elephant but “showed some resemblance to the rhinoceros.”<sup>20</sup> In 1868, Yale Professor Othniel Charles Marsh carried out a scientific excursion and collected fossil specimens in Nebraska, finding antecedents of the modern horse. Two years later, Marsh launched another expedition to Nebraska, this time with the aid of Yale graduate students. Along the North Platte and Loup Fork Rivers, the group successfully uncovered “primitive horses, miniature camels, and a mastodon.”<sup>21</sup> Another common animal found in the area was the Oredon, a pig-like herbivore slightly larger than a fox that grazed throughout the plains and wooded areas in sizable herds.<sup>22</sup>

Other fossilized animal remains found in the region from that era included two types of primitive rhinoceros, one adapted to water and the other suited to the plains. The first, the *Metamynodon*, resembled the modern-day hippopotamus—heavy, with nostrils and eyes elevated on the head adapted to aquatic foraging. The other was a smaller, hooved animal

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<sup>15</sup> Pabian and Swinehart, *Geologic History*, 9.

<sup>16</sup> Pabian and Swinehart, *Geologic History*, 11; Effinger, *Outline of the Geology and Paleontology*, 19.

<sup>17</sup> Effinger, *Outline of the Geology and Paleontology*, 19.

<sup>18</sup> Pabian and Swinehart, *Geologic History*, 24.

<sup>19</sup> Earl R. Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument* (Gering: Oregon Trail Museum Association, 1962), 2-3. A Titanotheres is an extinct, horned, ancestor of the modern horse dating from the Eocene and Oligocene eras.

<sup>20</sup> Effinger, *Outline of the Geology and Paleontology*, 12-13.

<sup>21</sup> William H. Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 425-26.

<sup>22</sup> Effinger, *Outline of the Geology and Paleontology*, 14.

resembling a horse. Similarly, ancient horses inhabited the area, although they were quite small compared to the modern breeds, averaging just 18 inches in height.<sup>23</sup>

As time progressed, saber-toothed cats came to inhabit the region, along with rodents similar to rabbits, rats, and beavers. In the more recent Miocene period, and moving up in geological layers through the Arikaree Group, further evidence of ancestral horses and rhinoceros are found, along with primitive camels, which are supposed to have evolved in North America before migrating to other continents.<sup>24</sup> Fossils found within the monument also include dry land tortoises (*Styemys*) and “mouse deer” (*Leptomeryx*).<sup>25</sup>

## Environment

Following the Ice Age that began roughly two million years ago and ended about 10,000 years ago, the present-day climate, flora, and fauna began to emerge. The North Platte River carved across Nebraska in a southeasterly direction, eroding the south side of the present North Platte Valley more than the north and creating a swath of plain approximately 25 miles wide in the immediate vicinity of Scotts Bluff National Monument.<sup>26</sup> The High Plains region of western Nebraska is typically semiarid with hot summers and extremely cold winters. Rainfall averages approximately 15 inches annually, with the majority of the precipitation falling in the summer months. Along with the mixed grass prairie typical of the plains, Ponderosa pine and Rocky Mountain juniper are found throughout the monument, while deciduous trees, such as cottonwood, elm, willow, and box elder inhabit the lower-lying floodplain. The monument supports an array of wildlife, from larger mammals such as mule deer, white-tailed deer, and mountain lions to smaller prairie dogs, rabbits, badgers, foxes, and coyotes. Flocks of geese, ducks, and sandhill cranes pass through the area during their seasonal migrations.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Effinger, *Outline of the Geology and Paleontology*, 14.

<sup>24</sup> Effinger, *Outline of the Geology and Paleontology*, 15-16, 20-22.

<sup>25</sup> National Park Service, “Scotts Bluff National Monument: Geologic Resources Inventory Report,” June 2009, 12.

<sup>26</sup> Jane Barbour Ramsey, *Scottsbluff: 1900 - 2000, Evolution of a City* (Estes Park, CO: Alpenaire Inc. Publishing, 1999), 3; Caven P. Clark, *Archeological Survey of Scotts Bluff National Monument, Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska* (Lincoln, NE: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Midwest Archeological Center, 1994), 1.

<sup>27</sup> Clark, *Archeological Survey of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 1.

## 2. American Indian Habitation and Use

### Lifeways in Western Nebraska to 1500

Humans have been in the central High Plains region for about 12,000 years. Archeologists define the cultural eras for this region in slightly different ways, but for the purposes of this study, the salient phases are Paleoindian (12,000–9,000 BP [before present]), Plains Archaic (9,000–2,000 BP), Plains Woodland (1–1000), Plains Village (1000–1500), and Historic (since 1500).<sup>28</sup>

Paleoindian peoples were drawn to the High Plains by megafauna such as mammoths and bison. They practiced a mixed hunting and gathering subsistence strategy, a major component of which was the pursuit of big game. The Scottsbluff Bison Quarry near Signal Butte reflects hunting activity in this period. The site is a large 9,000- to 10,000-year-old deposit of bison bones from a now-extinct species (*Bison antiquus*), along with some dart points, flakes, and charcoal fragments.<sup>29</sup> The Scottsbluff projectile point type, named for this site, was used across the Plains from Texas to Canada and also has also been found in the Great Lakes region.<sup>30</sup> (See Figure 2.1, item d.) Another Paleoindian bison kill site was found on Ash Hollow Creek.<sup>31</sup>

A shift to warmer, drier conditions altered the grasslands and caused the megafauna to disappear. Subsistence strategies for humans in western Nebraska changed accordingly, creating the pattern termed Plains Archaic. Between 9,000 and 2,000 years ago, Plains Archaic peoples were nomadic and relied on a wide range of plants and animals, a more diverse set of resources than during the Paleoindian period.<sup>32</sup> Sites in the region such as Signal Butte and the Bisterfeldt Potato Cellar (Gering) provide evidence of the Plains Archaic cultural pattern.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> This chronological framework is drawn primarily from Amy Koch, *High Plains Archeology*, Explore Nebraska Archeology No. 5 ([Lincoln]: Nebraska State Historical Society, 2000), and Jack L. Hofman, ed., *Archeology and Paleoecology of the Central Great Plains* (Fayetteville: Arkansas Archeological Survey, 1996). Hofman prefers the term "Mesoindian" to "Archaic" (79).

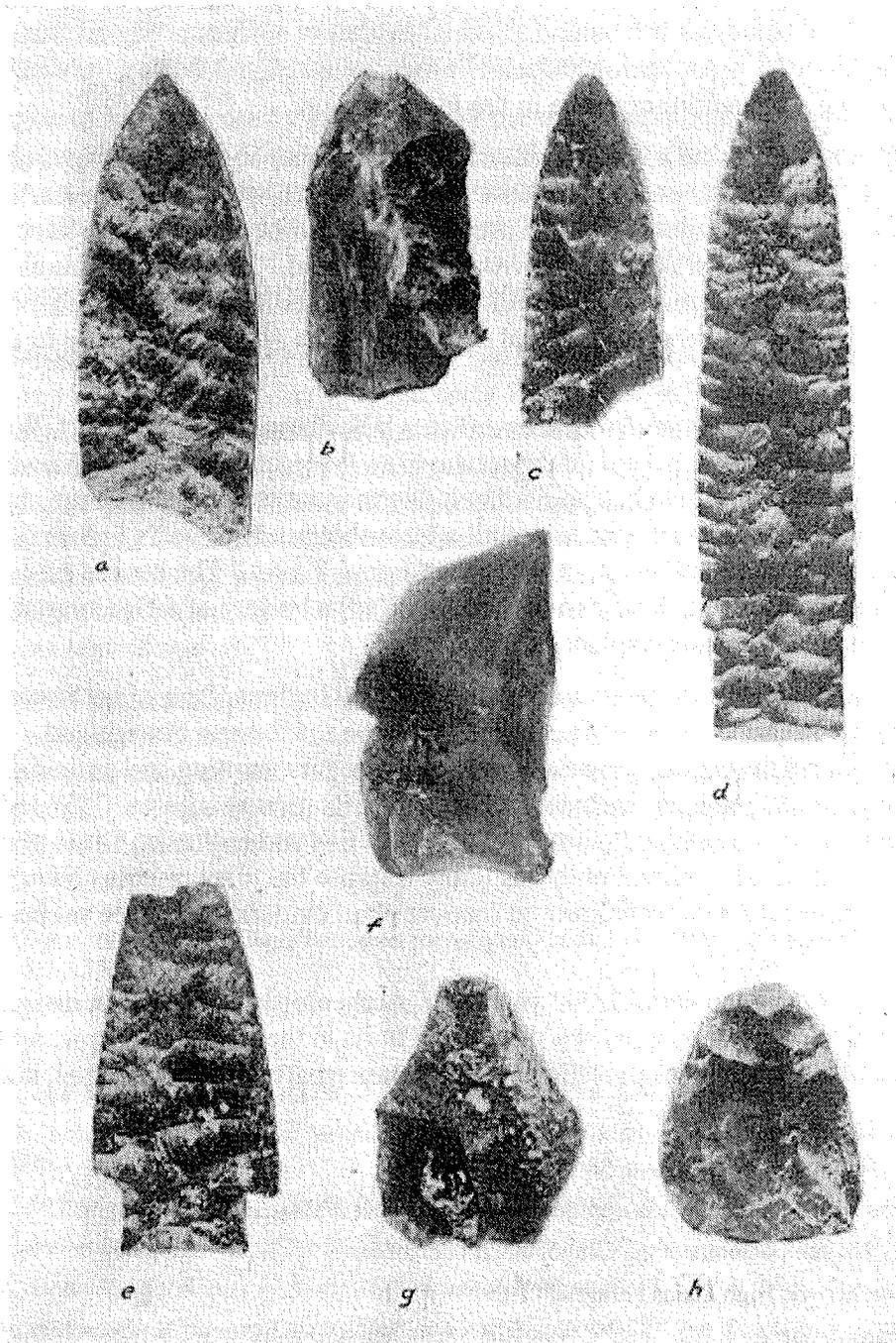
<sup>29</sup> C. Bertrand Schultz and Loren Eiseley, "Paleontological Evidence for the Antiquity of the Scottsbluff Bison Quarry and Its Associated Artifacts," *American Anthropologist* N.S. 37 (1935): 307, 310; Koch, *High Plains Archeology*, [6].

<sup>30</sup> Noel D. Justice, *Stone Age Spear and Arrow Points of the Midcontinental and Eastern United States: A Modern Survey and Reference* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 47-49; Jack L. Hofman, "Early Hunter-Gatherers of the Central Great Plains: Paleoindian and Mesoindian (Archaic) Cultures," in Hofman, *Archeology and Paleoecology of the Central Great Plains*, 70; "Some Important Projectile Point Types from Nebraska," *UNL News: Museum Notes* 56, no. 20 (March 17, 1977), File: Scottsbluff Points, Curatorial Files, Scotts Bluff National Monument, Gering, Nebraska [SBNM].

<sup>31</sup> Koch, *High Plains Archeology*, [7].

<sup>32</sup> Koch, *High Plains Archeology*, [7]; LuAnn Wandsnider, "Prehistoric High Plains Foragers: Starving Nomads, Affluent Foragers?," *Great Plains Research* 9 (Spring 1999): 14.

<sup>33</sup> Koch, *High Plains Archeology*, [9].



Eight artifacts from the Scottsbluff bison quarry (lettered in the order found).

**Figure 2.1:** Artifacts from the Scottsbluff bison quarry. The Scottsbluff point is labeled "d." Source: C. Bertrand Schultz and Loren Eiseley, "Paleontological Evidence for the Antiquity of the Scottsbluff Bison Quarry and Its Associated Artifacts," *American Anthropologist* N.S. 37 (1935).

Archeological material at Signal Butte indicates three separate periods of human occupation: a 5,000-year-old hunting complex, a pre-Woodland phase about 1,500 years old, and a Ceramic (Woodland) Period about 300 years ago.<sup>34</sup> Historian Elliott West considered this site to be one of the “clear and recurring signs of an erratic climate forcing major adjustments” in subsistence strategies. Some of these strategies left behind material evidence, such as at Signal Butte, while others were more ephemeral.<sup>35</sup> Archeologist Jack Hofman called Signal Butte a “pivotal site . . . in demonstrating a long occupation sequence in the Plains region . . . .”<sup>36</sup>

Climate change continued, and a wetter and cooler phase began about 2,000 years ago.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, Woodland cultural patterns became more evident in western Nebraska, signified by the use of pottery. Plains Woodland peoples practiced a mixed horticulture and hunting subsistence strategy. Archeologist Amy Koch wrote of this period, “Woodland cultures in the Panhandle region lived in fairly small groups, utilized open campsites, and used skin tents for shelter. Evidence also indicates they used natural shelters such as Ash Hollow Cave in the North Platte valley.”<sup>38</sup>

No sharp break occurred between Archaic and Plains Woodland cultures. In fact, Woodland traits appeared during the Archaic period, and Archaic lifeways persisted into the Woodland period. As archeologist Jack Hofman has pointed out, “Permanent structures, storage, use of ceramic objects, and plant processing equipment all appear thousands of years before the spread of Woodland traits and horticultural economies on the Central Plains.” The hunter-gatherers who utilized the region during the Woodland period “represent[ed] a variety of different traditions” and persisted until Euro-Americans displaced them.<sup>39</sup>

Plains Woodland camps, according to archeologist Jeffrey Eighmy, “are often located along ecotones. Many are on stream terraces with easy access to the upland and bottomland communities . . . .” Such sites usually contain hearths and fire pits, hunting and gathering tools, and pottery, but they do not generally include “permanent habitation structures.”<sup>40</sup> Woodland peoples consumed a wide range of land animals, along with fish and mollusks. Little plant evidence has been found at these sites, but that is likely because the plant remains have not survived, or because archeological techniques to recover plant evidence have not yet been employed.<sup>41</sup>

The Plains Village era began about 1,000 years ago. Archeologist Brad Logan distinguished Plains Villagers from Woodland peoples “by distinctive traits in their lithic, ceramic, and modified bone assemblages, changes in settlement/subsistence patterns, house forms, and

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<sup>34</sup> Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 58.

<sup>35</sup> Elliott West, *The Way to the West* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 8.

<sup>36</sup> Hofman, “Early Hunter-Gatherers of the Central Great Plains,” 89.

<sup>37</sup> Wandsnider, “Prehistoric High Plains Foragers,” 10.

<sup>38</sup> Koch, *High Plains Archeology*, [9].

<sup>39</sup> Hofman, “Early Hunter-Gatherers of the Central Great Plains,” 41.

<sup>40</sup> Jeffrey L. Eighmy, “The Central High Plains: A Cultural Historical Summary,” in *Plains Indians, A.D. 500–1500: The Archaeological Past of Historic Groups*, ed. Karl H. Schlesier (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 228.

<sup>41</sup> Eighmy, “The Central High Plains,” 229; Mary J. Adair, “Woodland Complexes in the Central Great Plains,” in Hofman, *Archeology and Paleoecology of the Great Plains*, 122.

evidence of an increasing reliance on domestic plant foods, including corn, beans, squash, sunflowers, and marsh elder."<sup>42</sup> During this period, communities based in horticultural villages in the Republican River drainage (Upper Republican culture) traveled to western Nebraska for seasonal hunts. The High Plains served as a "secondary utilization area" for Upper Republican groups, whose core use area was to the east.<sup>43</sup> High Plains sites connected with the Plains Village period are primarily camps with no evidence of structures, burials, or horticulture.<sup>44</sup>

In addition to seasonal use by villagers from the east, nomadic peoples continued to hunt on the High Plains. A nomadic lifeway termed "Dismal River" culture, a predecessor of Plains Apache culture, is reflected at sites throughout western Nebraska that are 300 to 350 years old.<sup>45</sup> Groups from the Rocky Mountain front also hunted in the region.<sup>46</sup>

## Archeology at Scotts Bluff National Monument

Four prehistoric sites were found at Scotts Bluff in surveys conducted in 1965 by Wendell Frantz and in 1975 by Marvin Kay.<sup>47</sup> In the early 1990s, Caven P. Clark carried out a more comprehensive archeological survey at the monument and identified another 51 sites, all but two of which are prehistoric.<sup>48</sup> His prehistoric finds ranged from perhaps 8,000 BP to 1450. Several charcoal samples provided "evidence of seasonal occupations by small groups engaged in food collecting activities."<sup>49</sup> Scotts Spring, he wrote, "appeared to be a complex stratified site" with a long occupational history, "which may span the Late Archaic to Protohistoric periods."<sup>50</sup> The several springs at the monument, he concluded, "were of undoubted significance to the prehistoric settlement system."<sup>51</sup>

Clark found lithic artifacts, flakes, and scatters; ceramic sherds; animal bone; charcoal; a stone ring; and hearth features.<sup>52</sup> He also found "a quadrilateral piece of iron with a circular hole . . . of unknown function or age."<sup>53</sup> Clark's surveys did not yield any items or sites connected with the fur trade or Oregon Trail, but he did locate a "small historic dump site."<sup>54</sup> He also recorded the site of the former CCC camp, where he found twentieth-century trash.<sup>55</sup> Other

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<sup>42</sup> Brad Logan, "The Plains Village Period on the Central Plains," in Hofman, *Archeology and Paleoecology of the Great Plains*, 123.

<sup>43</sup> Eighmy, "The Central High Plains," 236-37.

<sup>44</sup> Eighmy, "The Central High Plains," 234.

<sup>45</sup> Koch, *High Plains Archeology*, [11].

<sup>46</sup> Alice B. Kehoe, *North American Indians: A Comprehensive Account*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992), 296.

<sup>47</sup> Clark, *Archeological Survey of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 1.

<sup>48</sup> Clark, *Archeological Survey of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, i, 1.

<sup>49</sup> Clark, *Archeological Survey of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 39.

<sup>50</sup> Clark, *Archeological Survey of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 20.

<sup>51</sup> Clark, *Archeological Survey of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 40.

<sup>52</sup> Clark, *Archeological Survey of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, *passim*.

<sup>53</sup> Clark, *Archeological Survey of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 26.

<sup>54</sup> Clark, *Archeological Survey of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 6, 16.

<sup>55</sup> Clark, *Archeological Survey of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 29.

historic-era finds included trash from the former Scottsbluff Country Club, broken plate glass, and stone walls.<sup>56</sup>

In 1995, archeologist Vergil Noble of the NPS's Midwest Archeological Center (MWAC) explained that the site density within the park is moderate. But, he commented, "the number is more impressive when one considers that much of the park has very steep terrain that would be uninhabitable." Most known sites have exposed by erosion, and Noble hypothesized that many more "are likely to lie undiscovered beneath the surface."<sup>57</sup>

Archeologist Anne Vawser of MWAC visited Scotts Bluff in September 2008 to record three recently identified sites at the monument. A sample of charcoal from the first site yielded a radiocarbon age of 1930 +/-40 BP. A charcoal sample could not be readily obtained from the second site, but Vawser thought it was likely from the same time period as the first. The final site she thought might be late prehistoric, based on a projectile point found there.<sup>58</sup>

On the trip, Vawser also identified a historic dump site that she preliminarily dated to the late 1940s or early 1950s. She noted, "The park has had several similar historic dumps evaluated previously to determine age and significance in hopes of eventually cleaning up the area. All are similar types of ravine dumps in the northern portion of the park."<sup>59</sup>

A more extensive prehistoric archeological site, known as the Bisterfeldt Potato Cellar, lies half a mile east of the present monument boundary. Henry Bisterfeldt discovered a human burial on his land in 1932 when he began digging a potato cellar. Al Moore of Scottsbluff excavated what he could of the archeological material while work on the cellar continued, and onlookers also removed items. Moore's finds included the remains of a number of humans (adults and infants), along with various artifacts (tools, hunting points, and shell ornaments).<sup>60</sup> David Breternitz and John Wood classified the site as Woodland and connected it to other Woodland burials in the High Plains region.<sup>61</sup>

The site of Fort Mitchell (1864–1867) lies about two miles northwest of Scotts Bluff and was listed on the NRHP in 1978. A long period of agricultural activity on the site has significantly disturbed the surface, but archeological research has located what appear to be features of the fort and activities associated with it.<sup>62</sup> In 2004, Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS)

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<sup>56</sup> Clark, *Archeological Survey of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 29, 36.

<sup>57</sup> Vergil E. Noble, Supervisory Archeologist, "Archeological Resources at Scotts Bluff National Monument: Research Summary and Management Issues," October 11, 1995, File: Archeology Reports-SCBL: Folder 1, Curatorial Files, SBNM.

<sup>58</sup> Anne M. Wolley Vawser, Archeologist, Midwest Archeological Center, to Manager, Midwest Archeological Center, August 8, 2011 (copy provided by Vawser).

<sup>59</sup> Vawser to Manager, Midwest Archeological Center, August 8, 2011.

<sup>60</sup> Merrill J. Mattes, "Archaeology of the Bisterfeldt Potato Cellar Site," *Southwestern Lore* 31, no. 3 (December 1965): 56-61.

<sup>61</sup> David A. Breternitz and John J. Wood, "Comments on the Bisterfeldt Potato Cellar Site and Flexed Burials in the Western Plains," *Southwestern Lore* 31, no. 3 (December 1965): 62-63.

<sup>62</sup> Amy Koch, "Cultural Resource Investigations of the Scottsbluff West Viaduct Project [STPD-L79G(111)], Scottsbluff County, Nebraska," prepared for the Nebraska Department of Roads and the Federal Highway Administration, June 2004, 9; Robert K. Nickel and Catherine A. Nickel, "Archeological Geophysical Surveys at Fort Mitchell, Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska," prepared for Nebraska State Historical Society, March 2007, 4-5; Amy Koch, "Supplemental Historic Resources Report for the Scottsbluff West Viaduct Project, Scotts Bluff County," Project Number STP-RZZ-92-1(121), January 2010, n.p. [2].

archeologist Amy Koch examined the surface and conducted test trenching, yielding a variety of artifacts that may be associated with the fort. She also revealed posts, post holes, and fragments of adobe that are likely related to the fort or a Pony Express station.<sup>63</sup>

In 2006, Robert and Catherine Nickel, under the guidance of NSHS archeologists, performed geophysical surveys in an effort to locate remains of the fort. Their surveys revealed various subsurface anomalies that may be connected with artifacts, fort structures, a wagon road, or a “road ranch” that was also on the site.<sup>64</sup> In 2010, Amy Koch reevaluated archeological and historical evidence and concluded, “these exercises have advanced the possibility, albeit speculative that the Fort is much nearer the existing highway than previously thought.” She also noted that “perhaps as much as three-fourths of the Fort may still exist” below the surface.<sup>65</sup>

## Peopling the Plains, 1500-1830

The Historic period began on the central Plains in the mid-1500s, when Spanish explorers reached villagers in present-day Kansas. Until the late 1700s, American Indians in the region had little direct contact with Europeans. Instead, the effects of activities in more distant regions, such as the French and British fur trade in the Great Lakes and upper Mississippi region and the Spanish colonization of New Mexico, rippled into the interior. The presence of Europeans in these areas caused dislocations and created new opportunities for American Indians, one indirect result of which was the movement of newly nomadic groups onto the central Plains.

Changes in the relative power of tribes in Great Lakes and upper Missouri, combined with the expansion of hunting for fur-bearing animals, had the net effect of shifting some tribal territories toward the Plains. The Lakota, for example, moved westward from Minnesota in the early eighteenth century to take advantage of the fur trade.<sup>66</sup>

At the same time, horses spread through intertribal trade from Spanish settlements in the Southwest onto the Plains. They reached the central Plains in the first quarter of the eighteenth century and the northern Plains and upper Mississippi regions in the late eighteenth century.<sup>67</sup> The mobility offered by horses allowed American Indians to utilize resources of the arid plains more effectively, whether for subsistence or trade. Some groups transformed their economies around the horse, shifting from semisedentary lifeways to more nomadic ones.

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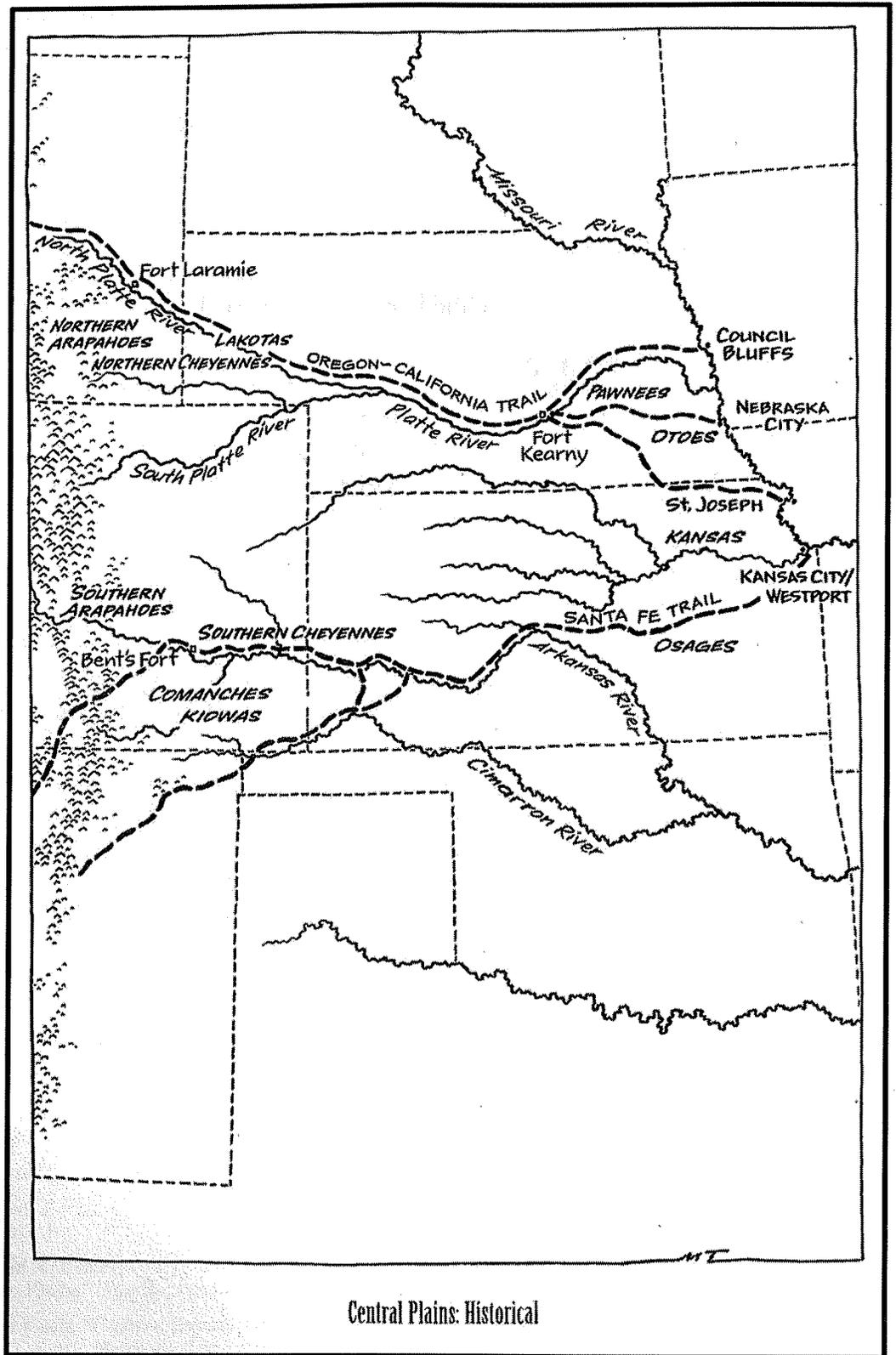
<sup>63</sup> Koch, “Cultural Resource Investigations of the Scottsbluff West Viaduct Project,” 5-9.

<sup>64</sup> Nickel and Nickel, “Archeological Geophysical Surveys at Fort Mitchell,” *passim*.

<sup>65</sup> Koch, “Supplemental Historic Resources Report for the Scottsbluff West Viaduct Project,” [3].

<sup>66</sup> Kehoe, *North American Indians*, 303.

<sup>67</sup> Carl Waldman, *Atlas of the North American Indian* (New York: Facts on File Publications, 1985), 56.



**Figure 2.2:** American Indian Tribal Territories circa 1830.  
 Source: Elliott West, *The Way to the West*, 1995, 2.

## *Cheyenne and Arapaho*

The Cheyenne left the upper Mississippi region in the late 1600s, first settling on the Minnesota River. During the 1700s, they moved across eastern North Dakota to the upper Missouri River, close to the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Ojibwe. Conflict with the Ojibwe, along with epidemic diseases, led the Cheyenne to move farther west in the late 1700s.<sup>68</sup> Their transition was not just geographic but also economic: they shifted from a more sedentary, horticultural lifeway to a nomadic one based on hunting and trade. Horses were critical to this change, providing not only the means to hunt but a critical commodity in the trade the Cheyenne facilitated.<sup>69</sup> By the early 1800s, the Cheyenne occupied the Cheyenne River, White River, and Black Hills regions, and their hunting range extended south to the Platte River, where the Kiowa and Arapaho were also present.<sup>70</sup>

At the time that Meriwether Lewis and William Clark traveled up the Missouri and across the Plains, the Lakota had reached the Missouri but appear not to have expanded west of it. Soon thereafter, however, the Lakota began taking control of territory west of the river, reaching as far as the Black Hills.<sup>71</sup> According to ethnologist Zachary Gussow, “during the first quarter of the nineteenth century and possibly longer the Dakota, with the exception of raids and forays, extended no further west than the eastern edge of the Black Hills and that they shared parts of this territory with the Cheyenne who were living on Cheyenne river [*sic*].”<sup>72</sup>

Meanwhile, the Arapaho also appear to have started in Minnesota and moved west, but their path is not clear. They appear to have migrated west of the Missouri by the late 1700s.<sup>73</sup> Lewis and Clark did not encounter the Arapaho directly but reported them as being at the headwaters of the Loup River. Perrin du Lac located the Arapaho in the Platte River region in 1801–1802.<sup>74</sup> According to anthropologist Loretta Fowler, “By 1806 the Cheyenne and Arapaho had formed an alliance, in large measure to counter the Sioux pushing west from the Missouri.”<sup>75</sup>

The Lakota succeeded in forcing the Cheyenne and Arapaho south of the Platte River around the late 1820s, and they, in turn, dislodged the Kiowa and Comanche from the area between the Platte and Arkansas Rivers. In the 1830s, a geographical division became more noticeable among the Cheyenne and Arapaho that was reinforced by the establishment of trading posts in their territories. The southern Cheyenne and Arapaho focused their activities around Bent’s Fort

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<sup>68</sup> Elliott West, “Called Out People: The Cheyennes and the Central Plains,” *Montana, The Magazine of Western History* 48, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 4.

<sup>69</sup> West, “Called Out People,” 6.

<sup>70</sup> Zachary Gussow, “An Ethnological Report on Cheyenne and Arapaho: Aboriginal Occupation,” in *Arapaho-Cheyenne Indians*, ed. David Agee Horr (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1974), 57-58.

<sup>71</sup> Gussow, “Cheyenne and Arapaho Aboriginal Occupation,” 60.

<sup>72</sup> Gussow, “Cheyenne and Arapaho Aboriginal Occupation,” 61.

<sup>73</sup> Gussow, “Cheyenne and Arapaho Aboriginal Occupation,” 70-71.

<sup>74</sup> Gussow, “Cheyenne and Arapaho Aboriginal Occupation,” 73.

<sup>75</sup> Loretta Fowler, “Arapaho,” *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. William C. Sturtevant, vol. 13, pt. 2 *Plains*, ed. Raymond J. DeMallie (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 840.

on the Arkansas River (built there at the suggestion of Cheyenne leader Yellow Wolf), while the northern bands centered on Fort Laramie.<sup>76</sup>

### **Lakota**

The Lakota had been dislocated from the upper Mississippi by the better-armed Cree and Assiniboine tribes and moved onto the Minnesota prairies. They, too, acquired guns through trade and began to expand their beaver-hunting territory, dislodging other tribes such as the Cheyenne and Omaha. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Lakota controlled a region along the Missouri River, between the Arikara to the north and the Omaha to the south.<sup>77</sup>

The Lakota had access to horses in the early eighteenth century, but, according to historian Richard White, "the Sioux assimilation of the horse into existing cultural patterns occurred only gradually."<sup>78</sup> By the late eighteenth century, the Lakota were utilizing horses to carry out a dual economy of beaver trapping and bison hunting. They shifted increasingly toward bison as the trade in buffalo robes grew and provided them with new economic opportunities. By the early 1800s, bison hunting was their primary economy, and they competed aggressively and successfully against other tribes for control of hunting territories.<sup>79</sup>

The buffalo robe trade (pursued by American Indians and non-Indians alike) put increasing pressure on bison herds in the Missouri River region. The Lakota responded to local depletions by expanding their hunting territory to the south. Their need for horses also led them to look southward, and they traded with or raided southern tribes to maintain their herds.<sup>80</sup> In the process, they pushed other tribes to the south and west. They also allied with the Cheyenne and Arapaho, helping to secure their control of territory south of the Missouri.<sup>81</sup>

By the 1830s, the Brulé and Oglala Lakota bands had expanded their hunting grounds to the Platte River. Richard White explained,

The arrival of the Sioux on the Platte was not sudden; it had been preceded by the usual period of horse raids. Nor did it break some long accepted balance of power. Their push beyond the Black Hills was merely another phase in the long Sioux advance from the edge of the Great Plains.<sup>82</sup>

The Platte River sat within a neutral zone or buffer region between competing tribes. "Because little pressure was put on the animal populations of these contested areas by hunters," White wrote, "they provided refuge for the hard-pressed herds of adjacent tribal hunting grounds."<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Gussow, "Cheyenne and Arapaho Aboriginal Occupation," 63; West, "Called Out People: The Cheyennes and the Central Plains," 12.

<sup>77</sup> Richard White, "The Winning of the West: The Expansion of the Western Sioux in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Journal of American History* 65, no. 2 (September 1978): 321-23.

<sup>78</sup> White, "The Winning of the West," 323.

<sup>79</sup> White, "The Winning of the West," 323-25.

<sup>80</sup> White, "The Winning of the West," 331.

<sup>81</sup> White, "The Winning of the West," 333-34.

<sup>82</sup> White, "The Winning of the West," 334.

<sup>83</sup> White, "The Winning of the West," 334-35.

## Pawnee

The Pawnee Indians occupied a territory west of the Missouri River and stretching from the Elkhorn River in the north to the Kansas and Republican Rivers in the south.<sup>84</sup> According to geographer David Wishart, the Pawnee were

direct descendants of the Lower Loup peoples who lived in villages on the banks of the Loup and Platte rivers from about 1600 to 1750 and who had, in all probability, originally migrated from the Southwest or from the southern plains. The ancestors of the Pawnee in Nebraska may go even further back, to what has been called the Central Plains tradition (900 to 1450), but this remains unproven.<sup>85</sup>

The Loup River people practiced a mix of horticulture and hunting. Their earthlodge villages were characterized by storage pits, which historian Richard White deemed a sign that they “produced large, storable surpluses . . . .”<sup>86</sup> Four autonomous groups of Loup River people—the Skiri (or Skidi), Chawai, Kitkahahki, and Pitahawirata—coalesced in the mid-nineteenth century to form the Pawnee tribe.<sup>87</sup> The Skiri Pawnee, who lived along the Loup River, hunted as far west as the forks of the Platte River, competing with the Comanche, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and ultimately the Lakota in this territory.<sup>88</sup>

The Pawnee bands practiced a seasonal cycle that involved planting and tending to crops in May and June, hunting bison in July and August, harvesting crops in September, hunting bison again in late fall, camping in creek bottoms during the winter, and returning to their villages in March.<sup>89</sup>

The Oglala Lakota and the Skiri Pawnee competed for control of Platte River hunting grounds in the 1830s, at the same time Euro-Americans began traveling to Oregon via the Platte. In 1833, the Pawnee ceded their land south of the Platte, but they were permitted to continue hunting south of the river.<sup>90</sup> Weakened by a smallpox epidemic in 1838, the Skiri Pawnee lost an 1839 battle with the Oglala “that cost the Pawnees between eighty and one-hundred warriors and led to the *de facto* surrender of the Platte hunting grounds by the Skidis.”<sup>91</sup> When Euro-American emigration along the Platte River increased in the 1840s, the Lakota were well in control of the western Platte hunting territory.

Although American Indians undoubtedly knew about Scotts Bluff and encountered it in the course of hunting in the North Platte River Valley, their understandings of the formation have not been well documented. In 1942, 82-year-old Edgar Fire Thunder, a Lakota from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, visited the summit. He recalled camping across the river from Scotts

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<sup>84</sup> Douglas R. Parks, “Pawnee,” *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. William C. Sturtevant, vol. 13, pt. 1 *Plains*, ed. Raymond J. DeMallie (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 515 (Figure 1).

<sup>85</sup> David J. Wishart, *An Unspeakable Sadness: The Dispossession of the Nebraska Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 4.

<sup>86</sup> Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 149.

<sup>87</sup> Parks, “Pawnee,” 515.

<sup>88</sup> Parks, “Pawnee,” 515; Wishart, *An Unspeakable Sadness*, 27.

<sup>89</sup> White, *The Roots of Dependency*, 171.

<sup>90</sup> Wishart, *An Unspeakable Sadness*, 63.

<sup>91</sup> White, “The Winning of the West,” 337.

Bluff in 1865. But the newspaper article reporting his visit did not indicate what significance Thunder may have attached to Scotts Bluff.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> “‘We Should Have Stayed,’ Aged Sioux Says on Seeing Valley,” [clipping from unidentified newspaper], October 21, 1942, File: “Park Operations 1937–1941, Manuscript File,” Curatorial Files, SBNM.

### 3. Exploration and Expansion

#### Exploration of the Great Plains

Prior to the nineteenth century, there was little formal European exploration of the vast trans-Mississippi territory stretching to the Rocky Mountains. In 1541, the Spanish explorer Francisco Vasquez de Coronado entered the area in search of gold and riches supposedly held by the Quivira Indians, but he gave up the quest in modern-day Kansas having found “only a squalid Indian village.”<sup>93</sup> Little record of further exploration exists until an ill-fated expedition led by General Pedro de Villasur nearly two hundred years later. In 1720, Villasur and his party reached the territory that is now Nebraska at the forks of the Platte River, but they were killed by the Pawnee.<sup>94</sup> The French also made forays through the Louisiana Territory, which encompassed present-day Nebraska. In 1739, the brothers Pierre and Paul Mallet crossed Nebraska, although they traveled mostly in what is now the eastern part of the state. Tracing a route along the Platte River, the brothers are credited with giving the river its name, which has been variously described as meaning “flat” or “shallow.”<sup>95</sup>

France ceded the Louisiana Territory to Spain in 1762. Through a clandestine treaty between the two nations, Spain retroceded control of Louisiana to France in 1800. A formal treaty followed in 1801, and when President Thomas Jefferson learned of it, he sent word to Napoleon that the United States was interested in purchasing New Orleans.<sup>96</sup> Napoleon responded with a counteroffer to sell the entire territory, and Jefferson agreed. On July 4, 1803, newspapers announced that the United States had purchased Louisiana Territory in April. Within a year, Jefferson had prepared an expedition to explore, map, and catalog what lay beyond the Mississippi, headed by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark.<sup>97</sup>

The 1804–1806 Lewis and Clark expedition did not travel near Scotts Bluff. But, as historical geographer David Wishart has commented, Lewis and Clark “acted as the catalyst for the American fur trade of the West” by opening the upper Missouri River.<sup>98</sup> Noted Scotts Bluff historian Merrill J. Mattes concurred, writing that following Lewis and Clark’s Corps of Discovery “came the fur trappers and traders.”<sup>99</sup>

The first Euro-American to document sighting Scotts Bluff was fur trader Robert Stuart, who worked for John Jacob Astor’s Pacific Fur Company.<sup>100</sup> Stuart and six others left Fort Astoria in present-day Oregon in June 1812, carrying correspondence to New York. In October, they discovered an easy passage over the Continental Divide, now known as South Pass, south of the

<sup>93</sup> Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 2.

<sup>94</sup> Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 2; Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 3.

<sup>95</sup> Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 2-3; Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 4.

<sup>96</sup> Stephen E. Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 72-73, 93; Howard R. Lamar, ed., *The New Encyclopedia of the American West* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 657-58.

<sup>97</sup> Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage*, 101-2.

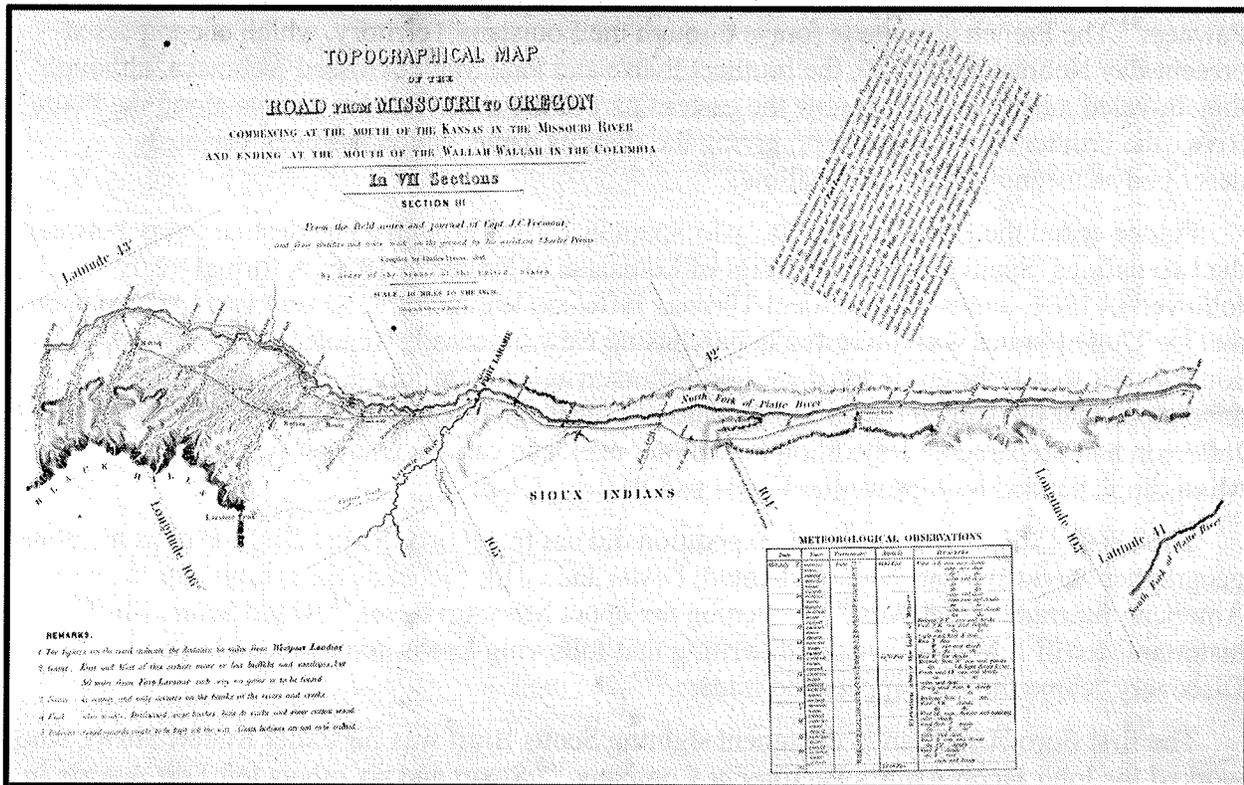
<sup>98</sup> David J. Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West, 1807–1840: A Geographical Synthesis* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 22.

<sup>99</sup> Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 3.

<sup>100</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 4; Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire*, 33.

Wind River Range. Stuart's party continued down the North Platte, camping near Scotts Bluff on December 25, 1812.<sup>101</sup> The central overland trail to Oregon and California would later take the same path in reverse, going up the North Platte and crossing the Rocky Mountains at South Pass. But until the mid-1820s, fur traders did not use this route.

In 1820, Major Stephen H. Long led the first U.S. government-sanctioned expedition along the Platte River, crossing western Nebraska on the way to the Rocky Mountains of Colorado.<sup>102</sup> Long's expedition produced a map that "became standard for a generation" and also resulted in the successful collection of scientific artifacts from the region.<sup>103</sup> Significantly, however, Long labeled the area of the Great Plains on his map as the "Great Desert," a name that would dissuade Americans from settling the region for some time to come.



**Figure 3.1:** Charles Preuss Map, 1846. This map was produced in conjunction with John C. Frémont's survey. Source: University of Nebraska-Lincoln Image and Multimedia Collections, <http://contentdm.unl.edu/cdm/ref/collection/trails/id/1379>.

In 1842, Lieutenant John C. Frémont was charged with carrying out a formal investigation and survey of the American West. He set out in May, launching the first of three expeditions he would eventually lead west. He understood that his mission was not just a scientific one—it was also to facilitate American expansion and emigration.<sup>104</sup> Frémont succeeded in these goals,

<sup>101</sup> Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire*, 33-34.  
<sup>102</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 4; Frank N. Schubert, *Vanguard of Expansion: Army Engineers in the Trans-Mississippi West, 1819-1879* (Washington: GPO, n.d.), 3.  
<sup>103</sup> Schubert, *Vanguard of Expansion*, 3.  
<sup>104</sup> Schubert, *Vanguard of Expansion*, 20.

mapping the central overland route (see Figure 3.1) and providing detailed information of use to travelers. He also helped to unravel the myth of a Great American Desert west of the Mississippi.<sup>105</sup>

## The Fur Trade

“A primary purpose of the Lewis and Clark expedition was to determine the suitability of the Trans-Missouri West for the fur trade,” David Wishart argued. He continued,

President Jefferson instructed Meriwether Lewis to make note of fur-bearing animals, to ascertain the attitudes of the native occupants to the fur trade, and, most fundamentally, to establish the “most direct and practicable water communication across the continent, for the purposes of commerce.”<sup>106</sup>

In the early nineteenth century, the fur trade expanded up the Missouri River and west to the Rocky Mountains. Early activity in the Missouri and Rocky Mountain trade was unsystematic, but by the mid-1820s, it had become highly organized. Wishart identified two different production systems at work:

The Rocky Mountain Trapping System was based on beaver pelts, the Euro-American trapper, the rendezvous trade nexus, and the Platte overland supply route. The main product of the Upper Missouri Fur Trade, on the other hand, was bison robes, procured and processed by Native Americans, exchanged at the trading posts for manufactured products, and moved to St. Louis by water transportation.<sup>107</sup>

Of the two systems, the Rocky Mountain beaver trade had the earlier impact on the history of Scotts Bluff. William Ashley of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company (RMFC) established the rendezvous strategy in 1824–1825. He arranged for his trappers to go out in small groups for several months and then to regroup on the Green River in July 1825. He collected the furs and transported them to St. Louis via the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers. Later that year, Ashley sent out another large party led by Jedediah Smith. It traveled along the Platte and over South Pass, establishing the main route for subsequent RMFC trips. The trappers again gathered at a designated spot the following July, where Ashley resupplied them and collected the furs.<sup>108</sup>

Ashley left the RMFC in 1826 and shifted to the supply business. Jedediah Smith, David Jackson, and William Sublette took over the RMFC, continuing to use the rendezvous system and the Platte River route.<sup>109</sup> Competition in the Rocky Mountain fur trade increased in the 1830s. In particular, the American Fur Company (AFC) stepped up its efforts to capture the trade, using various routes to the rendezvous points.<sup>110</sup> Wishart notes, “The alternative supply routes used by the American Fur Company did cut the costs of transportation but in every other way they proved inferior to the conventional central route.” In 1834, the AFC built a fort (Fort

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<sup>105</sup> Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire*, 242-44.

<sup>106</sup> Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West*, 18.

<sup>107</sup> Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West*, 10.

<sup>108</sup> Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West*, 124-26.

<sup>109</sup> Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West*, 127, 132, 134.

<sup>110</sup> Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West*, 144 (Figure 16), 148-49.

William) at the Laramie River and began using the Platte River corridor.<sup>111</sup> The RMFC then chose to shift its focus to the Missouri River trade.<sup>112</sup>

The AFC's monopoly in the Rocky Mountains was short-lived. Falling demand for beaver pelts, exhaustion of the resource, and a national economic downturn eroded the AFC's Rocky Mountain trade after 1836.<sup>113</sup> In the 1830s, the RMFC dissolved and the AFC concentrated its efforts on the upper Missouri. By the end of the decade, the fur trade was on the decline.<sup>114</sup> But the knowledge of the territory gained from these early explorers, trappers, and traders had demonstrated the economic potential of the vast territory west of the Mississippi.

## Expansion of the United States

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the United States more than doubled in size. The 1803 Louisiana Purchase encompassed what is now the state of Nebraska. But even more significant for the history of Scotts Bluff was the acquisition of the far western territories, particularly Oregon.

The United States began laying claim to the Oregon Country (present-day Oregon and Washington) through exploration in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Lewis and Clark traveled the Columbia River to its mouth and spent the 1805–1806 winter near present-day Astoria, Oregon.<sup>115</sup> John Jacob Astor, founder of the Pacific Fur Company, established a trading post at Astoria in 1811.<sup>116</sup> The British were not far behind: after exploring various northwestern rivers as an agent of the Northwest Company, David Thompson traveled down the Columbia River in 1811.<sup>117</sup> Historian William Goetzmann noted that the Canadians (i.e., the British) “eventually succeeded in dominating the Northwest largely because of the weakness of American efforts.”<sup>118</sup> During the War of 1812, the British seized Astor's Fort Astoria, and it was taken over by the Northwest Company.<sup>119</sup>

Although Spain and Russia also had claims to Oregon, Spain withdrew through the 1819 Adams-Onís Treaty with the United States, and Russia exited in 1824. The United States and Britain agreed to joint occupation in 1818, leaving the location of the United States' northern boundary with Canada unsettled.<sup>120</sup>

American emigration to the Oregon country began in the 1830s (see below). The United States and Britain agreed to establish the U.S.-Canada boundary at the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel in 1846. The United States further extended its boundaries through the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo,

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<sup>111</sup> Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West*, 149.

<sup>112</sup> Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West*, 152.

<sup>113</sup> Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West*, 161-62.

<sup>114</sup> Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire*, 163; Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West*, 150-51, 161.

<sup>115</sup> Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire*, 8.

<sup>116</sup> Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West*, 116-17.

<sup>117</sup> Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire*, 12.

<sup>118</sup> Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire*, 13.

<sup>119</sup> Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire*, 80.

<sup>120</sup> Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West*, 14.

which ended a two-year war between the United States and Mexico. Mexico ceded its northern territories to the United States, including the present-day states of New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, and California.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Lamar, *The New Encyclopedia of the American West*, 696-97.

## 4. Overland Emigration

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### The Great Platte River Road

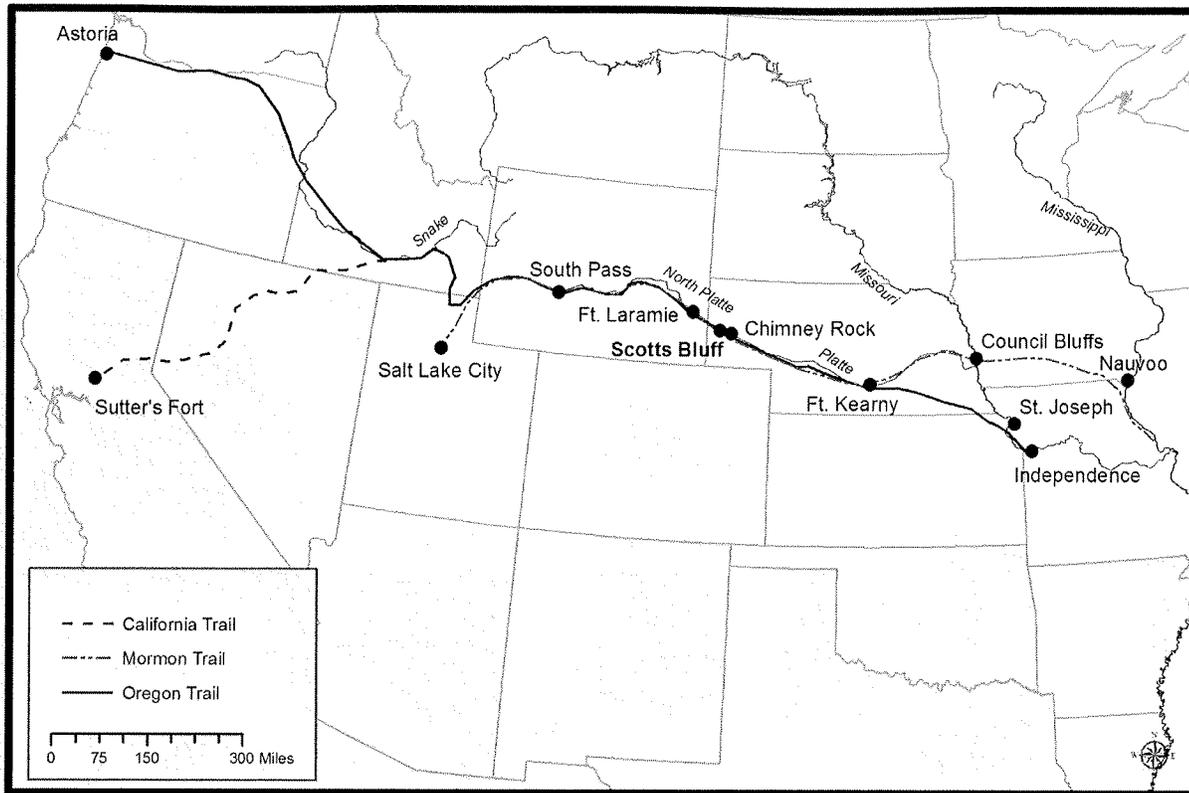
The fur trade in the Rocky Mountains helped establish the Platte River as a key overland travel corridor. In 1830, fur traders Jedediah Smith, William Sublette, and David Jackson took the first caravan of wagons along the Platte River and South Pass, demonstrating the feasibility of wagon travel over this route. Marcus Whitman and Samuel Parker traveled the Platte River route in 1835, responding to the Nez Perce Indians' request for missionaries to serve their tribe. Women—the wives of missionaries—traveled successfully to Oregon in 1836 and 1838, generating optimism that families could make the trip. In 1840, the first emigrant family traveled the Platte River route, and the first emigrant company composed primarily of families headed to Oregon in 1842.<sup>122</sup> John C. Frémont's 1842 expedition provided information and maps that made the journey seem more feasible.<sup>123</sup>

In the 1840s and 1850s, most emigrants on the Platte River Road set their sights on one of three destinations: the Oregon Country, the Great Salt Lake Valley, or California. Each of these places offered particular opportunities. The Oregon Country, which encompassed present-day Oregon and Washington, promised inexpensive farmland and a moderate climate. Brigham Young picked the Salt Lake Valley as a refuge for Mormons because of its isolation and the natural barriers that made it defensible. Initial migrants to Deseret, as the Mormons named their new colony, sought escape from persecution, while later arrivals answered the call to build the towns and farms necessary for Deseret's survival. The hope of easy wealth from gold mining drew the early, primarily male, travelers to California. Other opportunities, such as commerce and agriculture, sustained the flow of emigrants after the 1849 gold rush faded.

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<sup>122</sup> John Mack Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 6; Merrill J. Mattes, *Platte River Road Narratives: A Descriptive Bibliography of Travel Over the Great Central Overland Route to Oregon, California, Utah, Colorado, Montana, and Other Western States and Territories, 1812–1866* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 1.

<sup>123</sup> Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail*, 6-7.



**Figure 4.1:** Oregon, California, and Mormon Trails.  
 Redrawn from *Scotts Bluff National Monument: General Management Plan*, 1998, 5.

Most emigrants, according to historian John Mack Faragher, were “poor farmers from the Mississippi Valley.” They sought inexpensive (but fertile) farmland, more healthful climates, and better economic opportunities.<sup>124</sup> Emigrants recorded a wide range of reasons for heading west, according to historian John Unruh. They included

such prosaic factors as financial difficulties, the hope of economic improvement in the Far West, the search for better health, or political and patriotic considerations, before admitting to general restlessness or a desire for adventure. Occasionally noted also was the desire to get away from the increasingly virulent passions surrounding the Negro and slavery, the wish to flee the artificialities and restraints of society, the possibility of evading capture for indiscretions ranging from theft to murder, the willingness to undertake missionary work among the Indians, the attempt to forget a romance gone sour.<sup>125</sup>

An economic depression that began in 1837 provided a more pressing reason to seek new opportunities.<sup>126</sup>

Many had moved previously in an attempt to better their fortunes. Faragher determined that emigrants were typically at one of three stages in the life cycle: newlyweds seeking to set up their first homes, couples about eight to ten years into marriage with young children, and older

<sup>124</sup> Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail*, 16-18.

<sup>125</sup> John D. Unruh, Jr., *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 91.

<sup>126</sup> Lillian Schlissel, *Women's Diaries of the Westward Journey* (New York: Schocken Books, 1982), 19.

couples whose children were grown.<sup>127</sup> The cost of equipment and supplies for emigration plus setting up a new farm ranged from \$750 to \$1,500, so it was not an option available to everyone.<sup>128</sup>



**Figure 4.2:** Replica Emigrant Wagons at Scotts Bluff National Monument.  
Source: Emily Greenwald, 2010.

Whether they were bound for Oregon, the Salt Lake Valley, or California, most emigrants traveled along the Platte River and over South Pass. Merrill Mattes—who served as the monument’s custodian and then as its historian, before going on to other posts within the NPS—used the term “Great Platte River Road” to refer to the system of trails along both sides of the Platte River.<sup>129</sup> Emigrants generally organized into parties at “jumping-off points” along the Missouri River. Mattes found that rigid organization was not always a virtue, and “over-organized” companies usually broke into smaller, less formal parties partway into the journey.<sup>130</sup>

<sup>127</sup> Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail*, 18-19.

<sup>128</sup> Richard White, “*It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own*”: *A History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 185.

<sup>129</sup> Merrill J. Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road: The Covered Wagon Mainline Via Fort Kearny to Fort Laramie* (1969; rptd., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 7.

<sup>130</sup> Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, 33-35.

Ideally, emigrants began traveling around April 15 with the goal of reaching Oregon or California by September 1, ahead of dangerous weather in the mountains. They generally moved 15–20 miles per day east of Fort Laramie, but their pace slowed west of that point, due to the rougher terrain.<sup>131</sup>

Mattes estimated that nearly 500,000 people traveled along the Platte River Road between 1841 and 1866. The yearly numbers varied widely, with a high point of perhaps 65,000 in 1850.<sup>132</sup> He determined that more than one-third of emigrants traveled on the north side of the Platte, contrary to longstanding belief that only the Mormons used that side. And some Mormons used the south side of the river “because of big, unsympathetic non-Mormon crowds at the Council Bluffs jumping-off area and also because of the military protection afforded by Forts Kearny and Laramie.”<sup>133</sup>

## The Mormon Trail

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS Church), also known as Mormons, made up a distinct stream of the emigrant flood. Church leaders coordinated a massive migration to the Great Salt Lake Valley in 1846–1847, which was followed by other church-organized efforts to help converts make the journey.

Historian Leonard J. Arrington described the founding of the LDS Church as follows:

The history of Mormonism reaches back to the fervor of religious enthusiasm which engulfed western New York during the first half of the nineteenth century. During the 1820's Joseph Smith, an uneducated but sensitive Vermont-born farm youth, purportedly received visitations from heavenly beings and translated from gold plates a six-hundred-page record of the ancient inhabitants of the Americas called the *Book of Mormon*. His prophetic powers were accepted by a small group of relatives and friends and, on April 6, 1830, in Fayette, Seneca County, New York, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized.<sup>134</sup>

Although the Church of Christ (as it was first called) quickly drew adherents, its doctrines—such as living apostles and present-day revelations—troubled some mainstream Christians and led to persecution of Smith and his followers. Smith had a revelation in 1830 that the Mormons would establish a gathering place named Zion on the American frontier. He led the Mormons to Ohio, then to Missouri, and finally to Nauvoo, Illinois, in search of a hospitable place for their colony. But tensions with non-Mormons continued and resulted in Smith's murder in 1844.<sup>135</sup> Brigham Young then succeeded Smith as church president.

Non-Mormons in Illinois sought the complete ouster of Mormons from the state, and the mounting pressure led roughly 16,000 Mormons to leave Nauvoo and to settle temporarily across

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<sup>131</sup> Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, 53-54.

<sup>132</sup> Mattes, *Platte River Road Narratives*, 2-5.

<sup>133</sup> Merrill J. Mattes, “The Northern Route of the Non-Mormons: Rediscovery of Nebraska's Forgotten Historic Trail,” *Overland Journal* 8, no. 2 (1990): 7, 10.

<sup>134</sup> Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), 3.

<sup>135</sup> Lamar, *The New Encyclopedia of the American West*, 621-24; LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion: The Story of a Unique Western Migration, 1856–1860* (Glendale, CA: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1960), 17.

the river in Iowa.<sup>136</sup> Church leaders had already anticipated the need to move farther west and had been investigating possibilities in the Great Basin.<sup>137</sup> Arrington noted, "There is every reason to believe that the Mormons who fled their Nauvoo homes in February 1846 fully intended to settle in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake."<sup>138</sup>

Under Brigham Young's leadership, the Mormons successfully relocated to the Salt Lake Valley. To start, thousands of Mormons gathered at an encampment called Winter Quarters (present-day Florence, a community since incorporated into Omaha, Nebraska), where they spent the winter of 1846–1847 and made plans for the journey.<sup>139</sup> The initial party of Mormon emigrants left Winter Quarters in April 1847. They traveled on the north side of the Platte to Fort Laramie, crossed the river, used the main Oregon Trail to Fort Bridger, and then followed "the faint trace of the Reed-Donner party" to the Great Salt Lake Valley.<sup>140</sup>

Mormon migration continued in subsequent years. The LDS Church called for members to gather in the Salt Lake Valley to help make the colony a success. It established an emigration fund in 1850 and began helping Mormons emigrate from elsewhere in the United States.<sup>141</sup> A grave a few miles east of present-day Scottsbluff holds the remains of Rebecca Winters, a Mormon emigrant who died of cholera on the trail in 1852.<sup>142</sup> Winters has been memorialized with a granite bench at Scotts Bluff National Monument.

In 1852, the church extended to Europe its effort to assist Mormons in getting to Utah. Brigham Young began promoting emigration by handcart as an inexpensive migration strategy in 1855. Through an epistle issued in October 1855, the church requested donations to the emigration fund to support emigration by handcart. British Mormons traveled by ship to New York or Boston, then took trains to Iowa City where they built carts and organized companies. Ten companies traveled to Utah this way: five in 1856, two in 1857, one in 1859, and two in 1860. A total of 2,962 people made the journey, roughly 250 of whom died en route. Most of those deaths were from two of the 1856 companies that departed late and encountered bad weather before reaching Utah. In 1860, the church developed a different emigration strategy, sending wagons and supplies from Utah to transport emigrants from the Missouri River. The new method worked successfully in the 1860s, until it was supplanted by rail travel.<sup>143</sup>

## Scotts Bluff as Landmark and Obstacle

Overland travelers encountered a series of rock formations as they entered the High Plains from the east, starting with Court House Rock. In a study of one hundred emigrant journals and

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<sup>136</sup> Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 18.

<sup>137</sup> Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 39-41.

<sup>138</sup> Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 39.

<sup>139</sup> Lamar, *The New Encyclopedia of the American West*, 624.

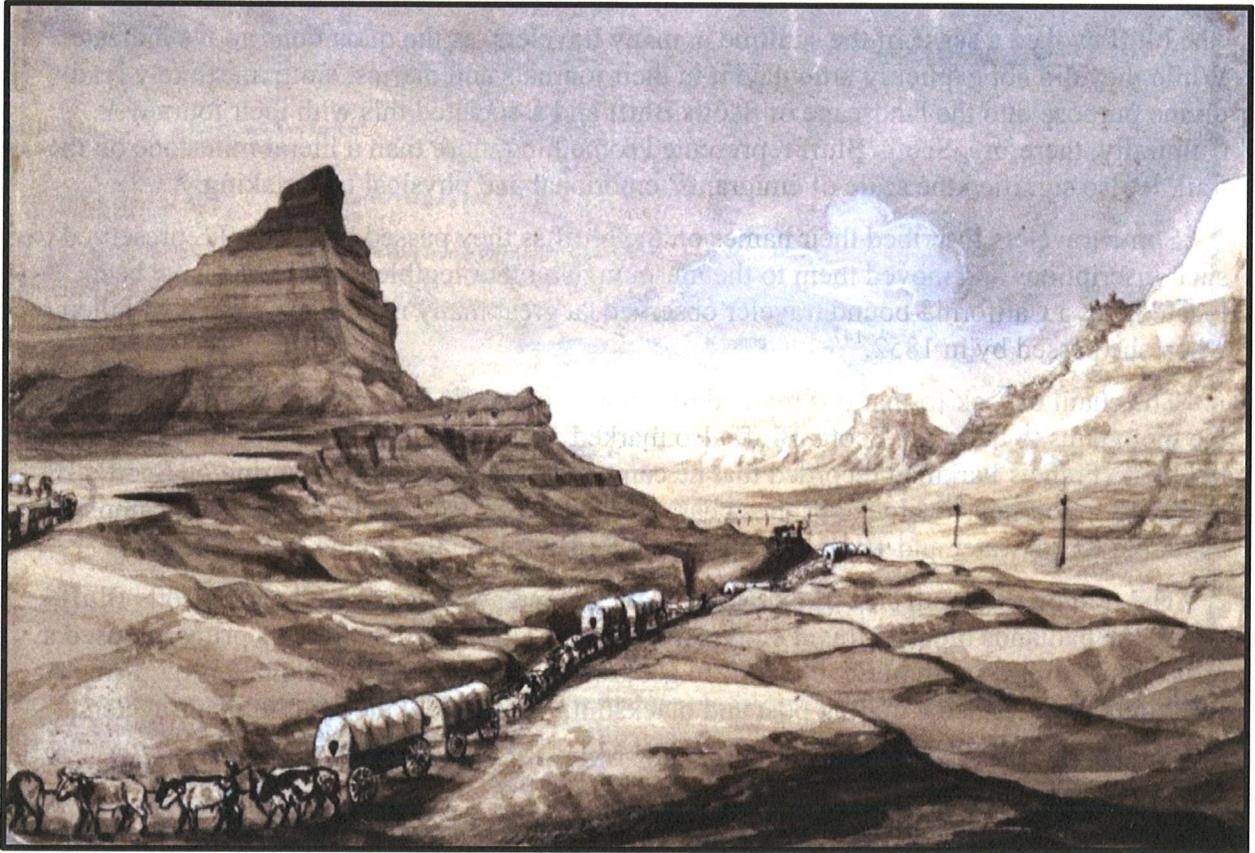
<sup>140</sup> Stanley B. Kimball, *Historic Sites and Markers Along the Mormon and Other Great Western Trails* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 49.

<sup>141</sup> Hafen and Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, 21-23.

<sup>142</sup> Aubrey L. Haines, *Historic Sites Along the Oregon Trail* (Gerald, MO: Patrice Press, 1981), 96. Haines commented, "This is one of the best-maintained graves of the emigration period, and is of particular interest because of the story that the CB&Q railroad shifted its location to avoid disturbing this grave" (97).

<sup>143</sup> Hafen and Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, 24, 46, 56, 191-93.

guidebooks, Mattes tabulated references to eight principal landmarks on the North Platte River: Ash Hollow, Court House Rock, Chimney Rock, Scotts Bluff, Laramie Peak, Independence Rock, Devil's Gate, and South Pass. He found that Chimney Rock ranked first (mentioned in 97 percent of the sources), while Scotts Bluff was second (77 percent).<sup>144</sup> Travelers on both sides of the Platte remarked on Scotts Bluff.<sup>145</sup>



**Figure 4.3:** *Mitchell Pass*, by William Henry Jackson.

Source: William Henry Jackson Collection at Scotts Bluff National Monument, SCBL\_27.

Scotts Bluff, like the other major rock formations, helped overland travelers measure their progress on the journey and provided a sense of achievement. Emigrants remarked on Scotts Bluff's size and beauty, comparing it to an ancient temple or castle:

The spectacle was grand and imposing beyond description. It seemed as if Nature, in mere sportiveness, had thought to excel the noblest works of art, and rear up a mimic city as the grand metropolis of her empire. (Rufus Sage, 1841)

That immense and celebrated pile . . . advances across the plain nearly to the water's edge. If one could increase the size of the Alhambra of Grenada, or the Castle of Heidelberg . . . he could form some idea of the magnitude and splendor of this chef d'oeuvre of Nature at Palace-Building . . . (J. Henry Carleton, 1895)

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<sup>144</sup> Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, 380.

<sup>145</sup> Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, 425.

Looming afar over river and plain was “Scott’s Bluff,” a Nebraska Gibraltar; surmounted by a colossal fortress and a royal castle, it jutted on the water . . . (Philip St. George Cook, 1845)

This Scotts Bluff is grand beyond description. . . . It looks exactly like a splendid old Fort in thorough order, equipped and manned & ready for service, at a moment’s notice. (Mrs. Vodges, 1868)<sup>146</sup>

The bluff evoked a sense of the sublime in many travelers, as the quotations above indicate. While they did not explicitly articulate it in their journals and diaries, emigrants likely read divine purpose into the landscape of Scotts Bluff and associated this with their journey. Culturally, therefore, Scotts Bluff represented something more than a literal milestone on the trail. It also signified the scale of emigrants’ emotional and physical undertaking.

Some travelers inscribed their names on the bluff as they passed by. The NPS preserved two such inscriptions and moved them to the museum. No other legible inscriptions have been located, but a California-bound traveler observed “a great many names” on a piece of fallen rock when she passed by in 1852.<sup>147</sup>

The chain of rock formations marked the change in terrain between the plains to the east and the mountains to the west. Scotts Bluff also marked a spring that was a source of water for travelers. Francis Parkman recorded that he camped “by the well-known spring on Scott’s Bluff” on his 1846 journey.<sup>148</sup> Merrill Mattes characterized Scotts Bluff as one of the best campsites available for its water and wood, but heavy use took a toll on the timber resources there.<sup>149</sup>

The trail on the south side of the North Platte veered away from the river at Scotts Bluff, where the badlands blocked travel closer to the water. Until 1850, emigrants primarily used a pass about 8 miles south of Scotts Bluff to get around this section (Robidoux Pass).<sup>150</sup> An “A. Robidoux” established a trading post and blacksmith shop below the summit that travelers started noting in 1849. He built a new post in 1850 or 1851 in Carter Canyon, which may have focused on the American Indian trade. The post at the pass remained in use until 1851.<sup>151</sup>

In 1849, the AFC sold Fort John on the Laramie River to the United States and built a new post near Robidoux Pass, calling it “Fort John, Scotts Bluffs.” The AFC moved the post twice more, ultimately locating it south of a trail to Helvas Canyon.<sup>152</sup> The new post captured American Indian trade, but it was unsuccessful in drawing emigrant traffic away from Robidoux’s post.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> All quotations from Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, 423, 425.

<sup>147</sup> Randy Brown, *Historic Inscriptions on Western Emigrant Trails* (Independence, MO: Oregon-California Trails Association, 2004), 22.

<sup>148</sup> Quoted in Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 20.

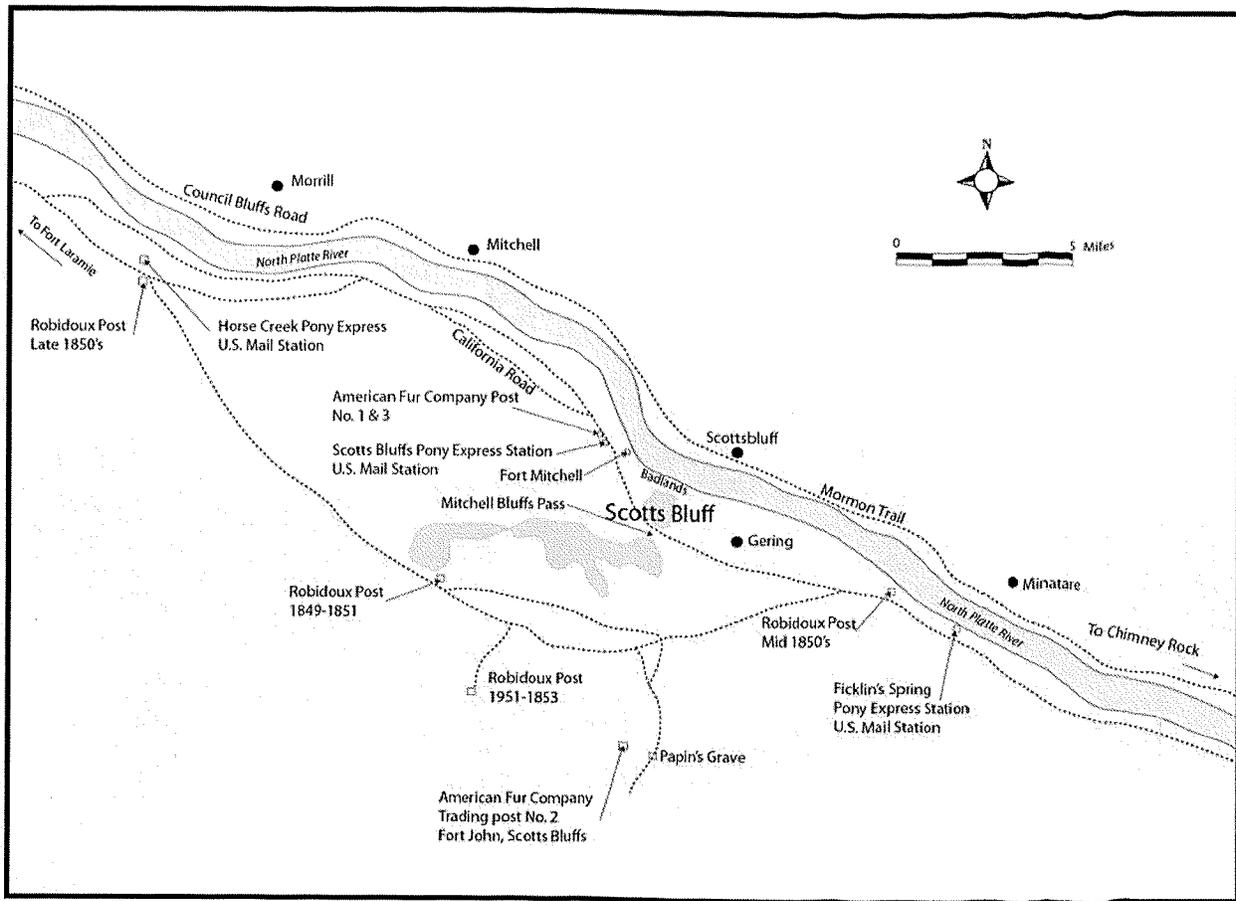
<sup>149</sup> Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 24.

<sup>150</sup> Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 26.

<sup>151</sup> Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, 438-39, 442-44.

<sup>152</sup> Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 37; Mattes, *Platte River Road Narratives*, 7.

<sup>153</sup> Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 37.



**Figure 4.4:** Trails, Passes, and Posts Near Scotts Bluff.

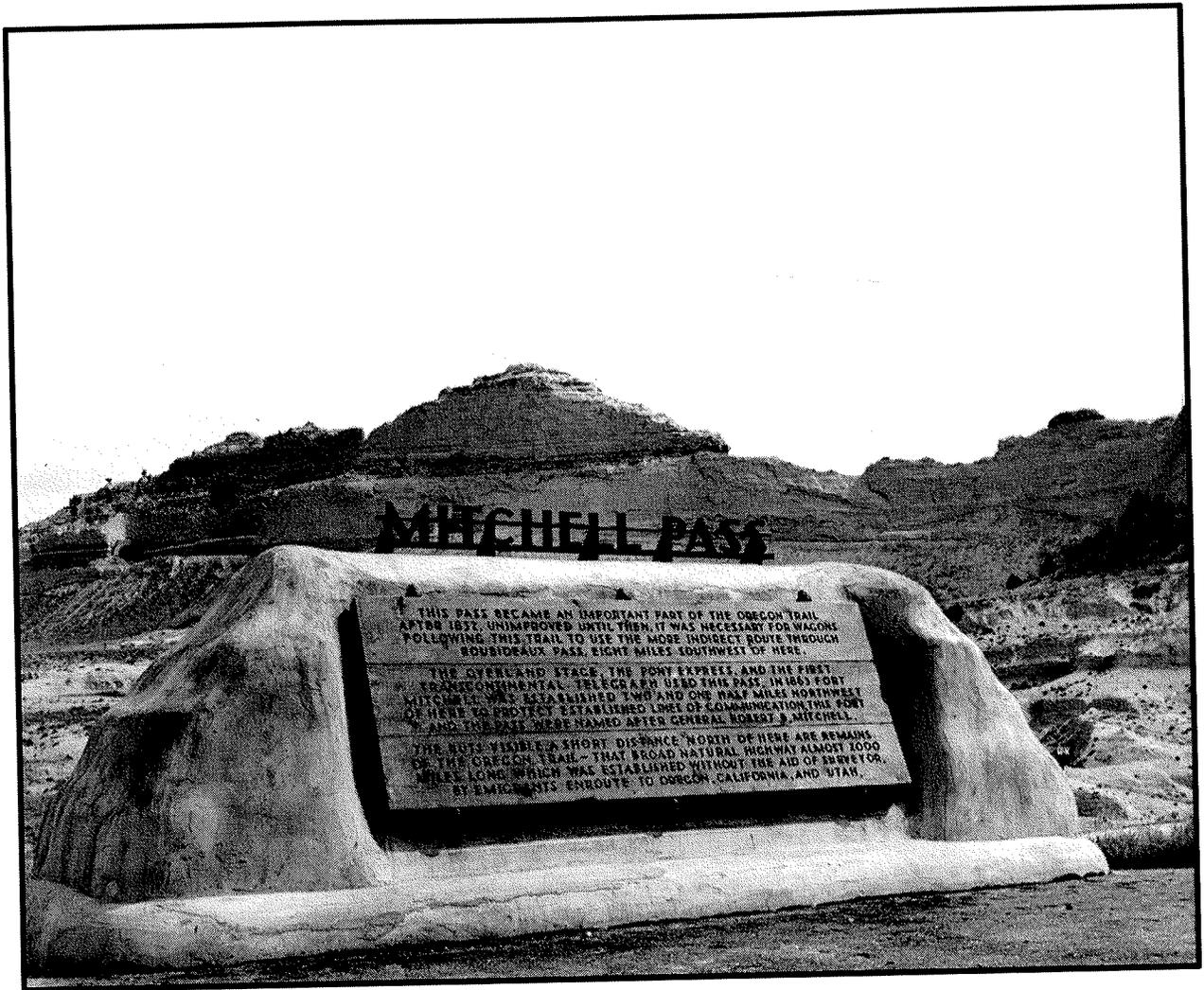
Redrawn from Merrill J. Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, 1969, xxxvi-xxxvii.

Another, more rugged pass lay closer to the river, skirting the southern and western edges of Scotts Bluff. This pass appears in some accounts as Scotts Bluff Pass, and it later became known as Mitchell Pass (named for the fort built just to the west in the 1860s). Travelers initially preferred the easier grade of Robidoux Pass, and the presence of Robidoux's post made it even more attractive. According to Mattes, "it is suspected that the U.S. Army Quartermaster from Fort Laramie was the first to take wagons through Mitchell Pass, possibly doing a little engineering to widen the passage and ease the grade."<sup>154</sup> Starting in 1850, emigrants began using Mitchell Pass more regularly, and in 1852, it drew more traffic than Robidoux Pass. Mitchell Pass predominated from then on, later becoming the route of overland stage lines, the Pony Express, and the transcontinental telegraph.<sup>155</sup> Mattes found that emigrants believed the Mitchell Pass route was shorter than the Robidoux Pass route.<sup>156</sup>

<sup>154</sup> Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 28.

<sup>155</sup> Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 28-29, 32.

<sup>156</sup> Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, 444.



**Figure 4.5:** Marker for Mitchell Pass (no date).

*Transcription:* This pass became an important part of the Oregon Trail after 1852. Unimproved until then, it was necessary for wagons following this trail to use the more indirect route through Roubideaux Pass, eight miles southwest of here. The overland stage, the Pony Express, and the first transcontinental telegraph used this pass. In 1863 Fort Mitchell was established two and one half miles northwest of here to protect established lines of communication. This fort and the pass were named after General Robert B. Mitchell. The ruts visible a short distance north of here are remains of the Oregon Trail—that broad natural highway almost 2000 miles long which was established without the aid of surveyor, by emigrants en route to Oregon, California, and Utah.

Source: Nebraska State Historical Society, RG 1308, S431-24.

## Emigration Summary

Mattes estimated that roughly half a million people traveled overland on the Platte River route between 1841 and 1866.<sup>157</sup> The numbers varied from year to year. For example, emigration climbed to a high of perhaps 65,000 in 1850 and then fell to under 10,000 in 1851. Mattes hypothesized that waning enthusiasm for California and a high number of deaths in 1850 were the cause. But numbers rebounded in 1852 to about the same level as 1850. Travel increased dramatically to around 100,000 emigrants in 1859, following the discovery of gold in Colorado. Figures were considerably lower in the early 1860s. Although they rebounded in 1866, that was the last year of significant migration along the Platte River route.<sup>158</sup>

Mattes found that about one-third of emigrants used the north side of the Platte. In general, people who departed from Council Bluffs traveled on the north side. Although the initial Mormon migration in 1847 used the north side of the Platte, Mormons traveling in subsequent years used both sides of the trail.<sup>159</sup>



**Figure 4.6:** Merrill J. Mattes and Oregon Trail Ruts at Scotts Bluff, 1937.

Source: Merrill Mattes to Director, NPS, May 7, 1937, File: Construction at SCBL, Manuscript Files, Curatorial Files, SBNM.

<sup>157</sup> Mattes, *Platte River Road Narratives*, 5.

<sup>158</sup> Mattes, *Platte River Road Narratives*, 2-5; Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, 21.

<sup>159</sup> Mattes, "The Northern Route of the Non-Mormons," 3, 7.

## Overland Mail and the Pony Express

The United States provided mail service to the growing settlements in the far West by contracting with companies that shipped mail by boat, traveling down the Atlantic coast and then up the Pacific coast, with a short land crossing at Panama. Mormon settlement of the interior West created a demand for mail service that could not be met by boat, and the United States issued its first contract for overland mail service in 1850. The overland mail traveled along the Oregon Trail via South Pass, carried by private contractors but funded with federal dollars. Service was somewhat erratic during the 1850s.<sup>160</sup>

The LDS Church organized the B. Y. Express and Carrying Company to address the Mormons' need for regular mail service, as well as to support ongoing emigration.<sup>161</sup> It was intended to carry passengers, mail, and freight, and its stations along the road would also provide aid to Mormons making the overland journey.<sup>162</sup> In 1856, the company submitted a bid to the federal government provide monthly mail service in the name of Hiram Kimball, an agent for the B. Y. Express, which was accepted.<sup>163</sup> The company planned for each of its stations to include a village settlement, fields for crops, mills, shops, and storehouses. According to Leonard Arrington,

Ultimately, stations were to be established every fifty miles or so, in order that there would be a station for every day's travel. The proximity of stations would also permit emigrants to walk from station to station and "have [their] supplies renewed at every such place."<sup>164</sup>

The company's mail contract was cancelled in June 1857. Historians LeRoy and Ann Hafen attributed that decision to anti-Mormonism, while Arrington commented that it "coincided with the decision to send a large consignment of federal troops to Utah" to assert control over the Mormons.<sup>165</sup>

Delivery of overland mail became entangled in sectional politics during the late 1850s, affecting the choice of routes for federal contracts. Some members of Congress supported using the central route (Oregon-Mormon-California Trail) because it could enhance emigrant safety. For example, Senator John B. Weller of California commented,

I confess that I not only desire to have this mail route, but what I regard as equally important, I desire to have a good emigrant route. I believe, by the establishment of a mail route with little posts every ten miles, (which you can get by giving to the contractors three hundred and twenty acres of land,) you will have in fact military posts all along that road. In this way you will give protection to your emigrants. That is what I am after.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> LeRoy R. Hafen, *The Overland Mail, 1849-1869: Promoter of Settlement, Precursor of Railroads* (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1926), 38, 56-57, 59.

<sup>161</sup> Hafen and Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, 150.

<sup>162</sup> Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 162.

<sup>163</sup> Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 164; Hafen and Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, 151.

<sup>164</sup> Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 165.

<sup>165</sup> Hafen and Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, 152; Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 169.

<sup>166</sup> *Appendix to the Congressional Globe*, 34 Cong., 3d sess., February 27, 1857, 317; also quoted in Hafen, *The Overland Mail*, 86.

Historian LeRoy Hafen found a similar sentiment among other members of Congress, who “did not look upon the Post Office Department as a mere business undertaking which must needs [*sic*] be self-supporting. To them the postal service, especially in its western lines, was and should be, primarily, a pioneer of civilization; marking the trails and keeping them open to travel, encouraging settlement, and acting as the precursor of the railroad.”<sup>167</sup> That philosophy did not always prevail, however. In particular, Joseph Holt, who became postmaster general in 1859, effected a series of retrenchments to reduce the department’s expenses, seeking to make the mail service self-supporting, rather than investing money in emigrant infrastructure.<sup>168</sup>

Two postmasters general—Aaron Brown and Joseph Holt—favored a southern route for the regular mail. In 1857, Brown awarded a contract with a significant subsidy to the Overland Mail Company, headed by John Butterfield, for a route from St. Louis to California via El Paso, Tucson, and Yuma. In terms of distance, this route was 700 miles longer than the central overland route from Independence to San Francisco via Salt Lake City. But the southern route was less vulnerable to winter weather.<sup>169</sup> Although John Hockaday and George Chorpenning obtained mail contracts for the central route, their federal subsidies were significantly lower. Congress sought to even the playing field and passed legislation that would have increased subsidies for the central route, but President James Buchanan vetoed the measure.<sup>170</sup> The postmaster general made some changes on the central route, including a switch to weekly service, but the promotion of mail routes remained a sectional issue.<sup>171</sup>

In December 1858, Butterfield and Chorpenning competed to see who could first reach San Francisco with the president’s annual message to Congress. The race included a company that provided mail by steamer from New Orleans to San Francisco, with a stage crossing at the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Mexico. However, only two copies of the president’s message were delivered to the starting point in St. Louis, and they were given to Butterfield and the steamer line. The agent for the central route had to wait for the speech to be published in St. Louis newspapers before departing, putting it a week behind the others. Although Butterfield won the race, the Hockaday-Chorpenning team completed the journey two days faster than Butterfield, despite winter weather conditions that impeded travel on the central route.<sup>172</sup>

In 1860, a novel experiment called the Pony Express boosted the popularity of the central route. It sprang out of a partnership formed in 1855, when William Russell, Alexander Majors, and William Waddell joined forces to create a monopoly on military freighting. They obtained contracts to provide cattle and other supplies to U.S. Army troops in Utah in 1857 and 1858. In 1859, they took over the Leavenworth and Pike’s Peak Express Company, which Russell had started with another partner to take advantage of the demand for mail service triggered by the 1858 Colorado gold rush. From this, they created the Central Overland California and Pike’s Peak Express Company and obtained a contract for mail service to Salt Lake City in 1860.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Hafen, *The Overland Mail*, 129.

<sup>168</sup> Hafen, *The Overland Mail*, 133-35.

<sup>169</sup> Ralph Moody, *Stagecoach West* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1967), 72-78, 80.

<sup>170</sup> Moody, *Stagecoach West*, 125.

<sup>171</sup> Moody, *Stagecoach West*, 126-27.

<sup>172</sup> Moody, *Stagecoach West*, 128-32.

<sup>173</sup> Hafen, *The Overland Mail*, 146-47, 157; Moody, *Stagecoach West*, 143, 149-51, 155, 174-75, 182.



**Figure 4.7:** *Pony Express*, by William Henry Jackson.  
Source: William Henry Jackson Collection at Scotts Bluff National Monument, SCBL\_83.

Russell, Majors, and Waddell launched the Pony Express as a private mail service to compete better with Butterfield's southern route.<sup>174</sup> The Pony Express traveled along the North Platte River and through Mitchell Pass. It began in April 1860 and lasted eighteen months. Stations were located at approximately 15-mile intervals.<sup>175</sup> Ficklin's Springs, the nearest station to the east of Scotts Bluff, sat 1 mile west of Melbeta. Scotts Bluff Station, the nearest one to the west, was approximately 2.5 miles northwest of Mitchell Pass, near where Fort Mitchell was later built.<sup>176</sup> Riders carried mail for 75 to 100 miles each way on the stretch of route they covered, riding it twice a week. During the winter, the Pony Express had some difficulty meeting its schedule, which had already been lengthened as an adjustment to the weather. When the transcontinental telegraph was completed in 1861 along the same route, the Pony Express folded.<sup>177</sup>

<sup>174</sup> Hafen, *The Overland Mail*, 134-35, 156-57, 159, 169.

<sup>175</sup> Hafen, *The Overland Mail*, 179.

<sup>176</sup> Merrill J. Mattes and Paul Henderson, *The Pony Express: From St. Joseph to Fort Laramie* (St. Louis, MO: The Patrice Press, 1989), 1, 63-67.

<sup>177</sup> Hafen, *The Overland Mail*, 176, 185, 187, 190.

Although the Pony Express did not make money, it established the primacy of the central route for overland mail. Russell, Majors, and Waddell did not emerge the winners in the contracting competition, however. In 1861, Congress provided for a transfer of Butterfield's contract from the southern route to the central route and increased service to six days per week.<sup>178</sup>

## Freighting and William Henry Jackson

The Great Platte River Road also served as a freighting route, and William Henry Jackson provided a glimpse of that phase of the trail's history in his 1866–1867 diary. Jackson was born in Keesville, New York, on April 4, 1843. He became a photographer in 1858, and in 1860, he moved to Rutland, Vermont, to work as a photographer's helper. He served with the 12<sup>th</sup> Vermont Volunteers during the Civil War, and after the war worked in Burlington, Vermont. The breakup of a relationship with Caroline Eastman, whom he had hoped to marry, prompted him to leave Vermont in 1866. He and a friend set out for the West in search of work. Jackson found a job as a "bullwhacker" with a freighting outfit; that is, he drove two wagons hitched together and drawn by six pairs of oxen. He only made one westbound journey in this job, but it took him past Scotts Bluff, where he camped just west of Mitchell Pass.<sup>179</sup>

In his diary, Jackson wrote,

At noon we corralled at a new ranch on the bank of the river 10 miles from Scotts Bluffs, which loom up before us in all its fanciful variety of outline. In the p.m. we drove up to & into the pass that leads through them. We had one of the steepest and worst gulches to drive through that we have yet had. . . . Our camp is right in one of the narrowest places of the pass & the walls rise up perpendicularly on either hand. They are not very high nor extensive but are quite picturesque.<sup>180</sup>

He sketched scenes along the trail, which he used as the basis for a series of watercolors many years later. Those paintings ultimately became part of the museum collection at Scotts Bluff National Monument.<sup>181</sup>

Jackson left the freight company at Salt Lake City and continued to Los Angeles.<sup>182</sup> After he returned from travels in 1867, he and two brothers established a photography studio in Omaha. Ferdinand Hayden hired Jackson as a photographer for an 1870 surveying expedition to Yellowstone, and Jackson continued to work with the Hayden survey until 1878. He later worked as a photographer for railroad companies and traveled with a commission to investigate railroad systems around the world.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Moody, *Stagecoach West*, 198.

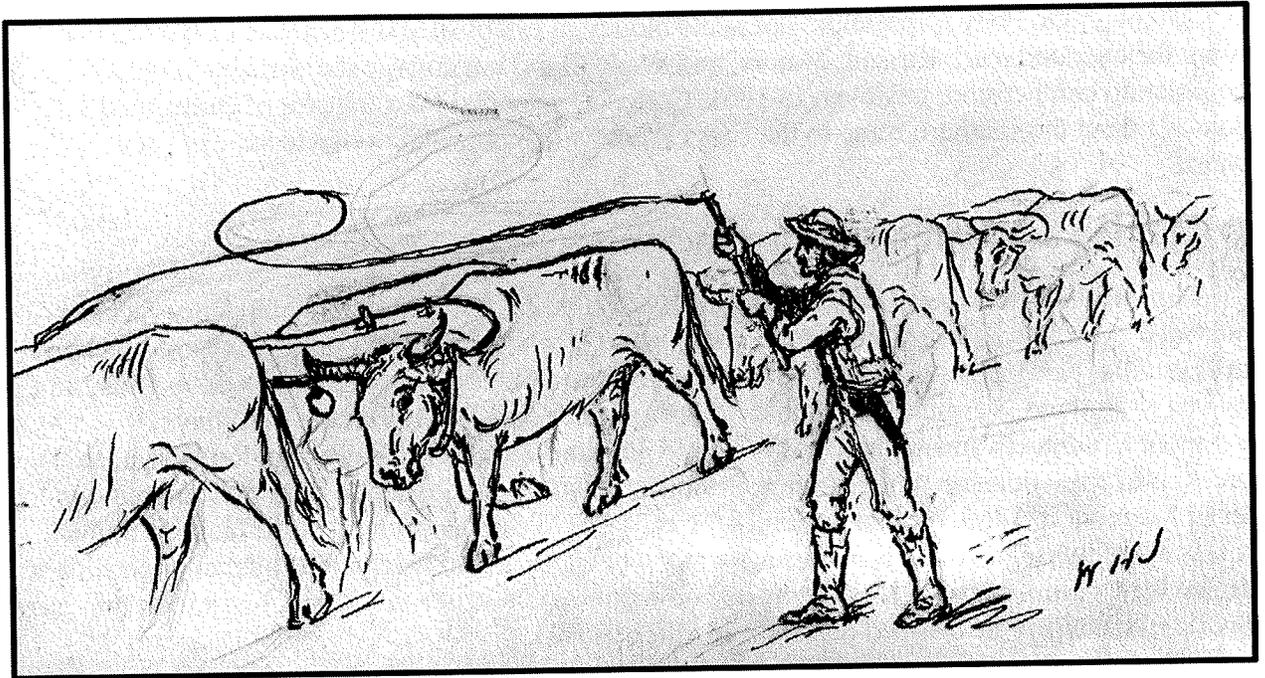
<sup>179</sup> LeRoy R. Hafén and Ann W. Hafén, eds., *The Diaries of William Henry Jackson, Frontier Photographer* (Glendale, CA: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1959), 12-13, 34, 61; Dan L. Thrapp, *Encyclopedia of Frontier Biography*, vol. II (1988; rptd., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 718.

<sup>180</sup> Hafén and Hafén, *The Diaries of William Henry Jackson*, 58, 61.

<sup>181</sup> A number of Jackson's paintings are at the Nebraska Museum of Art in Kearney, Nebraska.

<sup>182</sup> "Pioneer Photographer Tells Tale of Old-Time West in His Autobiography," clipping from unidentified newspaper, August 9, 1940, File: Jackson, William Henry, Newspaper Articles," Curatorial Files, SBNM.

<sup>183</sup> Hafén and Hafén, *The Diaries of William Henry Jackson*, 13-17; Thrapp, *Encyclopedia of Frontier Biography*, 2: 718.



**Figure 4.8:** *Bullwhacker*, by William Henry Jackson.  
Source: William Henry Jackson Collection at Scotts Bluff National Monument, SCBL\_281.

## The Railroad and the End of Overland Travel

Interest in spanning the continent with a railroad dates back to the 1840s. Rail construction was in the national interest but it was hugely expensive, so Congress began making grants of public land to railroad companies in 1850. The companies could sell the granted land to finance construction.<sup>184</sup> In 1853, Congress determined that it would support construction of one transcontinental rail line, but it did not select a route. Sectional, regional, and local interests advocated for different routes and termini, and Congress decided to fund multiple surveys in the hope of finding the best choice among them. Four surveys were conducted along the following parallels: 47<sup>th</sup> to 49<sup>th</sup>, the 38<sup>th</sup>, the 35<sup>th</sup>, and the 32<sup>nd</sup>. In addition, other surveyors explored the mountain passes in Oregon and California.<sup>185</sup> In 1862, following the start of the Civil War, the all-Union Congress approved a central route for a transcontinental railroad from Omaha to Sacramento, and construction began from both ends into the interior. The route ran along the Platte River to its forks then followed the South Platte a short distance. From that point, it took a westward course, passing well south of Scotts Bluff. The tracks were joined at Promontory Point, Utah, on May 10, 1869, a date that Mattes said “can be accepted as marking the end of the historic Oregon-California Trail.”<sup>186</sup>

<sup>184</sup> Lamar, *The New Encyclopedia of the American West*, 936-37.

<sup>185</sup> Schubert, *Vanguard of Expansion*, 95-97.

<sup>186</sup> Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 46.

## 5. Human and Environmental Change in the Platte River Corridor

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In his book *The Way to the West: Essays on the Central Plains*, Elliott West encouraged readers to think about the connections between overland emigration and the movement of American Indians onto the Plains. These two historical episodes, he wrote,

are among the most familiar in western history. Almost always, however, they are considered separately, as if they had only a glancing relation to each other. Somehow, an obvious point has been largely overlooked—that these were simultaneous, interrelated events with wide-ranging consequences for that part of the West where they overlapped, the central portion of the Great Plains.<sup>187</sup>

In the mid-nineteenth century, American Indians and Euro-Americans had different reasons for being in the Platte River region. Their various needs sometimes dovetailed, providing opportunities for trade or mutual assistance. At other times, they were truly at cross purposes, with each group defending its own access to the corridor and trying to exclude the other. The result, over a roughly 30-year period, was a significant reshaping of the region's demographics and environment.

### American Indian-Emigrant Relations

American Indians and overland travelers interacted with each other in myriad ways. Mutual misunderstandings and stereotypes sometimes led to conflict and even violence. But American Indians and emigrants also collaborated through trade and by providing assistance to one another. Historian Michael Tate argued that “[p]atterns of cooperation, mutually beneficial trade, and acts of personal kindness clearly outnumbered the cases of contentiousness and bloodshed in the two decades before the Civil War.” He also noted, “Anxieties, ambiguities, and distrust clearly produced more problems between American Indians and whites than did acts of innate barbarism or premeditated malice.”<sup>188</sup>

Euro-American emigrants often held negative perceptions of American Indians, fueled by images in art, literature, newspapers, guidebooks, and other travelers' accounts.<sup>189</sup> Overland travel was full potential hazards, but Tate found that “no danger loomed larger in the minds of emigrants than the fear of torture or death at the hands of murderous Indians.”<sup>190</sup> While American Indians do not seem to have had overblown fears of emigrants, they similarly viewed Euro-Americans through their particular cultural lenses and could not always make sense of travelers' behavior. For example, American Indians expected to exchange gifts as a prelude to other interactions. When Euro-Americans failed to comply, American Indians formed negative impressions of them.

Trade between American Indians and emigrants served both groups' needs. Plains Indians exchanged fresh or preserved game with travelers for bread and flour. They also sought tobacco

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<sup>187</sup> West, *The Way to the West*, 19.

<sup>188</sup> Michael L. Tate, *Indians and Emigrants: Encounters on the Overland Trails* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), x.

<sup>189</sup> Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*, 4-9, 13, 19.

<sup>190</sup> Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*, 3-4.

and processed foods, such as sugar and coffee. Guide books and other sources suggested that emigrants bring cloth, beads, and finished clothing to trade with American Indians. In return, American Indians offered moccasins and bison robes that provided better protection from the elements than the travelers' clothes. Emigrants found that American Indians were interested in colorful textiles, jewelry, and unusual items (such as umbrellas). American Indians also traded for money, which they could use to buy desired food or manufactured items from trading posts.<sup>191</sup>

In addition to acting as paid guides, American Indians helped some travelers by providing information about the trails, where to find grass, and where to camp. Tate noted that American Indians living along the trail had incentives to preserve good relationships. They relied on overland traffic to help sustain their economies. They also sought to minimize friction with travelers that might lead to violent backlash against themselves.<sup>192</sup>

Overland travelers gave some aid to American Indians, but Tate explained that this generally occurred "only after the whites got to know their Indian counterparts personally."<sup>193</sup> As passers-through, emigrants did not have the same incentive to foster good relationships with American Indians as American Indians did with travelers. They did, however, seek to avoid conflict and to benefit from the trade and aid American Indians offered.

An initial "spirit of cooperation" on the trails eroded over time. American Indians suffered the effects of epidemic diseases introduced by non-Indians, causing them to move away from the trail route and to become more wary of contact with Euro-Americans.<sup>194</sup> As game, timber, and grasses became more scarce along the trail, tensions between American Indians and emigrants grew, leading to a series of military conflicts (see below).

## Environmental Changes in the Platte River Corridor

American Indians and Euro-Americans, along with their horses and other domesticated animals, stripped the Platte River corridor of many of its natural resources. The process was complex and multicausal. Human and animal needs intertwined with grasslands ecology to transform the environment and demography of the Central Plains.<sup>195</sup>

Two historical phenomena triggered this era of rapid change. First, the nomadic tribes who competed for access to bison between the Platte and Arkansas Rivers negotiated a general peace. In 1840, the Cheyenne and Arapaho met with the Kiowa and Comanche near Bent's Fort and agreed to end warfare among their tribes. Elliott West described it as "their equivalent of the Congress of Vienna or the Treaty of Versailles—with the difference that this alliance has lasted a good bit longer."<sup>196</sup> The Great Peace of 1840, which ultimately also included the Lakota and the Plains Apache, dramatically transformed the nature (figuratively and literally) of the Central

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<sup>191</sup> Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*, 42-51.

<sup>192</sup> Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*, 105.

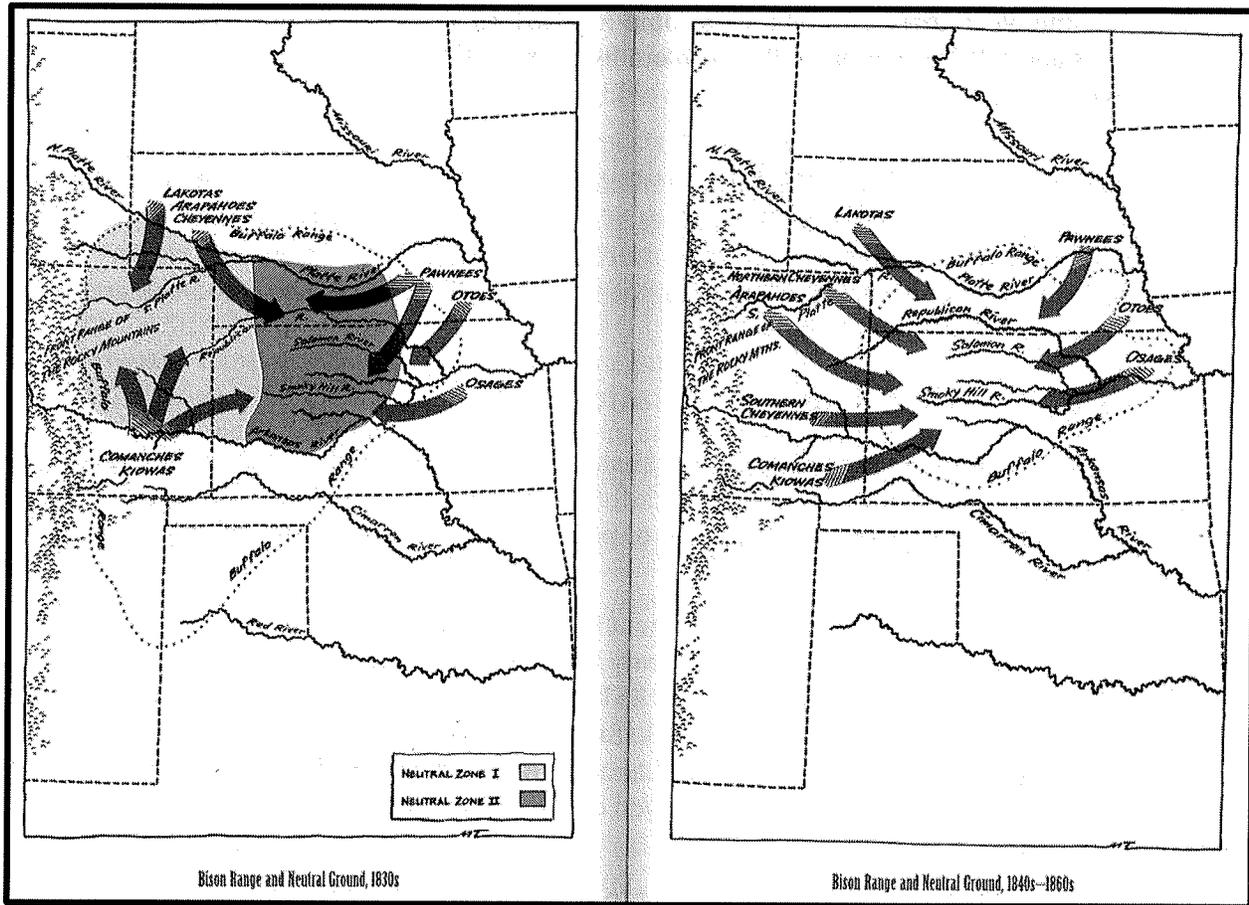
<sup>193</sup> Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*, 111.

<sup>194</sup> Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*, 135-36.

<sup>195</sup> Elliott West's *The Way to the West* offers the reader a clear and elegant account of how this transformation occurred. This section of the present report relies heavily on West's ideas and analysis.

<sup>196</sup> West, *The Way to the West*, 14.

Plains. The bison-rich region between the Platte and Arkansas Rivers had been a war zone in which none of the tribes could establish real control. After the peace, it became a joint hunting ground, used freely by all the tribes.<sup>197</sup> The peace was not universal, however, and the Lakota still battled the Pawnee to keep them away from the upper Platte River. The new wave of bison hunting in this region coincided with the start of heavy overland emigration by Euro-Americans, setting the stage for significant environmental change that ultimately undercut the bison-hunters' lifeways.<sup>198</sup>



**Figure 5.1:** Collapse of the Neutral Zone.  
 Source: Elliott West, *The Way to the West*, 1995, 64-65.

Second, Euro-American overland migration began in earnest in 1841 and the number of travelers rose steadily during the decade. Early travelers depended upon the Platte River corridor's natural resources to supplement what they had brought with them. Later in the decade, and increasingly through the 1850s, emigrants could meet their needs by buying "imported" goods at trading posts and stations along the route.

Despite their obvious differences in lifeways, American Indians and emigrants needed the same things: timber for fuel, grasses for their animals, and bison (or other game) for meat. The emigrants, as travelers through this landscape, only needed the resources temporarily and only

<sup>197</sup> West, *The Way to the West*, 62, 64-65.

<sup>198</sup> This is the central thesis of Elliott West's *The Way to the West*.

during the spring and summer. The American Indians, by contrast, lived on the Central Plains throughout the year and for the long term.

The emigrants passed through the Platte River corridor during the spring, when grasses were generally abundant. But the heavy grazing of their livestock, along with trampling, shifted the grass composition to less durable varieties.<sup>199</sup> By late in the year, when American Indians returned from hunting to the more temperate river valleys, grass resources were scarce. American Indians contributed to the pressure on grasses by then grazing their own animals at “exactly the time when those environments could least afford to feed them.”<sup>200</sup> A drought phase between 1848 and 1862 exacerbated the problem by causing American Indians to use the river valley forage during the summer, when they would normally have utilized grasses on the plains.<sup>201</sup>

The decline of the grasslands, combined with increased hunting pressure, drove bison out of the area between the Platte and Arkansas Rivers, where they had once been abundant. American Indians were left without one of their primary sources of subsistence and material culture. Ultimately, they became more dependent upon the United States for food and more vulnerable to American military and diplomatic pressure.

## Military Conflicts and Trail Fortification

In May 1846, Congress authorized the establishment of military stations along the Oregon Trail. It approved up to \$3,000 per station “to defray expenses,” plus up to \$2,000 per station to compensate “the Indian tribes which may own or possess the ground on which the said station may be erected . . . .”<sup>202</sup>

Thomas Fitzpatrick, who became Indian agent for the Upper Platte and Arkansas Agency in 1846, sought to hold “big talks” (multitribal treaty negotiations) with tribes in his district. He held one at Horse Creek near Fort Laramie in 1851. Attendees included Lakota, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Crow, Gros Ventre, Assiniboine, Arikara, and Shoshone, about 10,000 in total—the biggest treaty council ever held.<sup>203</sup> The allied Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho made up most of that number, however, having successfully driven off or intimidated the other tribes so that their presence was small.<sup>204</sup>

The resulting Treaty of Fort Laramie sought to keep the Platte River corridor free of conflict. It specified territorial boundaries for the various tribes and provided for peaceful relations, both among tribes and between the United States and the American Indians. Within a few years, however, the peace unraveled. According to Richard White, “both the boundaries [the treaty]

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<sup>199</sup> West, *The Way to the West*, 34-36.

<sup>200</sup> West, *The Way to the West*, 37.

<sup>201</sup> West, *The Way to the West*, 38-39.

<sup>202</sup> Act of May 19, 1846, 9 Stat. 13.

<sup>203</sup> Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1846-1890* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 60-61.

<sup>204</sup> White, “The Winning of the West,” 340-41.

created and its prohibition on intertribal warfare were ignored from the beginning by the only tribal participants who finally mattered, the Sioux.”<sup>205</sup>

One of the earliest clashes occurred in 1854, when a Miniconjou Lakota man killed an emigrant’s wandering cow for food. The cow’s owner called for restitution of \$25, but negotiations to resolve the matter were unsuccessful. Lieutenant John Grattan arrived at the Lakota camp with 29 soldiers and attempted to arrest the Miniconjou man. The soldiers fired shots, killing a band leader and escalating the incident. The Miniconjou responded by killing Grattan and all the soldiers. They contemplated an attack on Fort Laramie, but they decided instead to leave the area. The conflict raised tensions led the tribes to stay away from the trail and from Fort Laramie.<sup>206</sup>

In 1864, the army planned for additional posts to protect the Oregon Trail, including one near Scotts Bluff. Construction of that post, later named Fort Mitchell, began that year.<sup>207</sup> (The pass at Scotts Bluff became known as Mitchell Pass sometime after the fort’s construction.) Meanwhile, Colonel John Chivington with the First Regiment of Colorado Volunteers (700 men) attacked Cheyenne Indians camped at Sand Creek (Colorado) on November 29, 1864. Of the 70 to 163 Cheyenne killed, two-thirds were women and children. The massacre led the Cheyenne, Lakota, and Arapaho to launch a campaign of attacks along the South Platte in early 1865. They destroyed stage stations, telegraph lines, and ranches, and they raided wagon trains.<sup>208</sup> On February 5, American Indians attacked soldiers and civilians at Mud Springs. Troops from Fort Mitchell sped to Mud Springs and engaged the American Indians, who crossed to the other side of the North Platte and eluded the soldiers.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> White, “The Winning of the West,” 340.

<sup>206</sup> Tate, *Indians an Emigrants*, 219; John Waring, “Fort Mitchell,” *Nebraskaland*, December 1986, 35.

<sup>207</sup> Waring, “Fort Mitchell,” 36.

<sup>208</sup> Utley, *The Indian Frontier*, 93.

<sup>209</sup> Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 49; Waring, “Fort Mitchell,” 37.



**Figure 5.2:** *Fort Mitchell*, by William Henry Jackson.

Source: William Henry Jackson Collection at Scotts Bluff National Monument, SCBL\_28.

Another skirmish occurred in June 1865 at Horse Creek. Brulé Lakota being escorted by troops from Fort Laramie to Fort Kearny launched an attack on the soldiers. Troops from Fort Mitchell were dispatched to the scene. Although the cavalry pursued the Brulé, they crossed the river and avoided further encounter.<sup>210</sup> The focus of conflict between American Indians and Euro-Americans subsequently shifted north from the Oregon Trail to the Bozeman Trail, which miners used to cut through Lakota territory.

## The Removal of American Indians from the Platte River Corridor

By the late 1840s, the Pawnee were weakened by conflict with the Lakota, epidemic diseases, and lack of food. They ceded land to the United States in 1848 and again in 1857, leaving only a small reservation on the Loup River.<sup>211</sup> In the 1870s, the Pawnee were still suffering losses to the Lakota in the western hunting grounds south of the Platte, and they experienced new pressures from Euro-American settlers who took control of resources adjacent to the reservation and sought the tribe's removal from Nebraska. The Pawnee felt they had little choice but to cede the reservation and move to Indian Territory.<sup>212</sup> Richard White noted that the

<sup>210</sup> Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 49; Waring, "Fort Mitchell," 37.

<sup>211</sup> Wishart, *An Unspeakable Sadness*, 65, 102.

<sup>212</sup> Wishart, *An Unspeakable Sadness*, 188-98.

Pawnee experience was not uncommon: “Everywhere horticultural villagers steadily lost ground, first to the nomadic buffalo hunting tribes, then to the Americans.”<sup>213</sup>

In 1867, President Andrew Johnson chose Nathaniel G. Taylor as commissioner of Indian affairs. Taylor promoted peace with the Plains Indian tribes and sought to create two large reservations, one in the north and one in the south, to which the Plains tribes would be removed.<sup>214</sup> Congress passed legislation in 1866 in support of Taylor’s agenda. The act created a peace commission that aimed to end conflict with and among the tribes and to place them on reservations.<sup>215</sup>

The peace commission drafted a treaty to remove the Lakota to a large reservation in Dakota Territory. In exchange, the United States would abandon forts along the Bozeman Trail and keep whites out of the Powder River country. The commission called the Lakotas to Fort Laramie to sign the treaty. Some did, but others refused, including Red Cloud, whose concession was a particular goal of the treaty.<sup>216</sup> Conflicts between the United States and Red Cloud continued, but he ultimately signed the treaty in late 1868.<sup>217</sup> Mattes noted, “The treaty of 1868 marked the end of major Indian hostilities in the North Platte Valley.”<sup>218</sup> Based on the terms of that treaty, American Indians could no longer occupy and claim the territory along the river.

The United States Office of Indian Affairs (precursor to today’s Bureau of Indian Affairs) established the Red Cloud agency in 1871 to fulfill obligations under the 1868 treaty. The department’s goal was to remove American Indians from Fort Laramie to “the interior of the Indian country, far from the contaminating influence of irresponsible white men.”<sup>219</sup> The agency, located on the north side of the North Platte River and just west of the Nebraska-Wyoming Territory line, oversaw more than 9,000 Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho. Some of them lived at the agency, while others came in when supplies were issued and then left again.<sup>220</sup>

In 1873, the government relocated the agency to the White River in northwestern Nebraska, near present-day Crawford.<sup>221</sup> Conflicts between the Euro-Americans and American Indians continued, but the North Platte Valley was no longer the contested zone it had been in the 1850s and 1860s. Ultimately, the United States used a combination of force and diplomacy to relocate the tribes to reservations: the Lakota in Dakota Territory, the Northern Arapaho in Wyoming, and the Northern Cheyenne in Montana.

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<sup>213</sup> White, *The Roots of Dependency*, 199.

<sup>214</sup> Utley, *The Indian Frontier*, 108.

<sup>215</sup> Utley, *The Indian Frontier*, 109.

<sup>216</sup> Utley, *The Indian Frontier*, 118-20.

<sup>217</sup> Utley, *The Indian Frontier*, 120, 125.

<sup>218</sup> Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 50.

<sup>219</sup> *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior for the Year 1871*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1871), 698.

<sup>220</sup> *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior for the Year 1872*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1872), 267.

<sup>221</sup> *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior for the Year 1873*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1873), 243.

## 6. Settlement of Gering and Scottsbluff

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### Creation of Nebraska Territory

On May 30, 1854, Congress passed an act to “Organize the Territories of Nebraska and Kansas.” Commonly known as the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the statute set basic laws to govern the territories and provided for the establishment of territorial governments. Additionally, the law allowed appropriations for the construction of public and governmental buildings, libraries, and schools. The act made specific mention of government surveys for the land, “preparatory to bringing the same into market,” alluding to the future settlement of the territory.<sup>222</sup>

The legislation stipulated that the residents of the territories, upon achieving statehood, had the right to determine whether they would allow slavery or not. Violent conflicts over slavery erupted as Kansans sought statehood, contributing to the start of the Civil War in 1861. While some settlers were drawn to eastern Nebraska during the decade following the Kansas-Nebraska Act, people did not arrive in significant numbers until after the war ended in 1865.<sup>223</sup>

The Homestead Act of 1862 provided an added incentive for those considering a move to Nebraska. It allowed individuals to claim up to 160 acres of public land at no cost (except filing fees), provided they resided upon and cultivated the land for a period of five years.<sup>224</sup> Within a decade, the population of Nebraska had increased four-fold, growing from roughly 30,000 in 1860 to over 120,000 in 1870.<sup>225</sup>

### Settlement of Western Nebraska

On March 1, 1867, Nebraska became the 37<sup>th</sup> state to join the Union. The western part of the state remained sparsely populated into the 1880s, but cattle ranchers were drawn to its open range and grazed cattle on public land free of charge. For about 15 years starting in 1870, cattle ranching dominated western Nebraska’s economy. The region at that time was known as the “Great Cattle Kingdom,” characterized by large ranches held primarily by eastern investors. Overgrazing contributed to cattle ranching’s demise in the mid-1880s. Compounding the problem, the harsh winter of 1885–1886 devastated herds with bitter cold and heavy snows that obscured the forage that was already in short supply. Some operations lost as much as three-quarters of their cattle that winter.<sup>226</sup>

The completion of a federal survey of western Nebraska in 1885 ushered in the next phase of development.<sup>227</sup> The United States opened the land to homesteaders, who moved in and began fencing, diminishing the open range. In 1887, the open-range cattle economy in the valley effectively closed.<sup>228</sup> In its place came more homesteaders, the development of cities and towns,

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<sup>222</sup> Act of May 30, 1854, 10 Stat. 277.

<sup>223</sup> U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey Reconnaissance Survey Final Report of Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska* (Lincoln, NE: U.S. West Research, Inc., 1995), 15.

<sup>224</sup> Act of May 20, 1862, 12 Stat. 392.

<sup>225</sup> U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 15.

<sup>226</sup> Ramsey, *Scottsbluff: 1900 - 2000*, 5-7.

<sup>227</sup> Ramsey, *Scottsbluff: 1900 - 2000*, 7.

<sup>228</sup> Brand, *The History of Scotts Bluff Nebraska*, 59.

the railroad, and the beginnings of irrigated agriculture in the North Platte Valley that would set the tone for much of the next century.

In her history of Scottsbluff, Jane Barbour Ramsey identified two technologies that contributed to the successful settlement of western Nebraska: barbed wire to protect crops from grazing cattle and the windmill “to pump the abundant underground water for livestock and kitchen gardens.”<sup>229</sup>

Population centers sprang up along the North Platte River and along the routes thought to be suitable for future railroads. One of the earliest population centers in the region was Gering, Nebraska. On March 28, 1887, town founders filed the first map of Gering with Cheyenne County. Situated on the south side of the North Platte River, Gering originally encompassed 16 blocks. Although no railroad served the town at that time, the founders anticipated that the Union Pacific line would eventually come to them, based upon Union Pacific surveys completed in 1885.<sup>230</sup> It took over 20 years for the rails to finally arrive in Gering. In the interim, the new community laid a foundation of infrastructure, local government, and commerce.

Up to 1887, the majority of the western Nebraska panhandle fell within Cheyenne County.<sup>231</sup> The county seat, Sidney, lay some 75 miles away from the developing areas, prompting local residents to call for a closer county seat.<sup>232</sup> Subsequently, an 1888 election whittled Cheyenne County into several smaller counties, including Scotts Bluff.<sup>233</sup> Debate then arose over which town would become the new county seat. Two of the front-runners were Gering and Mitchell. Also founded in 1887, Mitchell derived its name from the fort that formerly served the area and sat on the north side of the North Platte River.<sup>234</sup> Residents of both communities recognized the benefits of becoming county seat and actively campaigned for the honor. In an attempt to sway the election in favor of Gering, town officials promised to build a bridge across the North Platte River.<sup>235</sup> The results of the initial county seat election were inconclusive, but a subsequent runoff resulted in Gering being declared the victor. On February 12, 1889, Gering was officially named the seat of Scotts Bluff County.<sup>236</sup>

Other towns were established in the county based largely upon the expansion of the railroads. In December 1899, Lincoln Land Company—a Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad (Burlington) subsidiary—platted 15 blocks of what would comprise the town of Scottsbluff on

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<sup>229</sup> Ramsey, *Scottsbluff: 1900 - 2000*, 8.

<sup>230</sup> U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 19, 26; North Platte Valley Museum, *Images of America: Gering, Scottsbluff, and Terrytown* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2009), 7.

<sup>231</sup> Robert J. Young, “The Story of Scottsbluff in Brief,” in *Scottsbluff and the North Platte Valley*, comp. Thomas L. Green, (N.p.: Scottsbluff Golden Jubilee Celebration Committee, n.d.), 7-9.

<sup>232</sup> U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 19.

<sup>233</sup> Sources vary on the number of smaller counties that came out of the division of Cheyenne County. One history records seven, another notes five, while yet another names four smaller counties but does not ascribe a total number. U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 19; North Platte Valley Museum, *Images of America*, 8; Young, “The Story of Scottsbluff in Brief,” 7-9.

<sup>234</sup> U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 33.

<sup>235</sup> U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 26; North Platte Valley Museum, *Images of America*, 7.

<sup>236</sup> U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 19.

the north side of the North Platte River. Within two months, and in stark contrast to Gering's long wait for the Union Pacific, the Burlington Railroad had extended its line to Scottsbluff.<sup>237</sup>

## Railroads

Railroads played a key role in the economic and agricultural success of the North Platte Valley in the early 1900s. Freight trains carried agricultural goods such as the valley's tremendous sugar beet crop to larger markets, while passenger rail transported people to and from the valley. Although the Union Pacific Railroad had completed surveys of the area south of the North Platte River well before the turn of the century, the Burlington line was the first to physically enter the valley in 1900. The Burlington line fostered the formation of towns along the north side of the river and served to promote the growth of these towns at a more rapid pace than their counterparts to the south. The town of Scottsbluff developed, in the words of Robert Young, "Riding on the back of the Burlington."<sup>238</sup> Burlington managers hoped that their line would sufficiently service the territory and entice people from the south side of the river to move north, but events unfolded differently.<sup>239</sup>

The residents of towns such as Gering held firm on the south bank of the North Platte, waiting for the Union Pacific. In 1907, construction began on the line. Four years later, on October 8, 1911, the first train finally entered Gering.<sup>240</sup> The arrival of the Union Pacific, which also provided passenger and freight service, created competition for the Burlington line.<sup>241</sup> Both rail lines benefited from the growth of agriculture in the region, and their business increased seasonally during the sugar beet harvest. Union Pacific added extra freight trains during the autumn to satisfy demand, while the Burlington boosted its service "from one train running three times a week to ten to twelve fast freights per day."<sup>242</sup>

## Irrigation

According to Jane Barbour Ramsey, the first use of irrigation in the North Platte Valley occurred when a few men channeled water from Winters Creek, a few miles east of the town of Scottsbluff, to irrigate 5 acres (Ramsey did not provide a date). The result, she wrote, was "a fine crop in the fertile alluvial soil."<sup>243</sup> Others soon recognized the potential of the land for irrigated agriculture. In 1887, the first formal construction of irrigation works began under the initiative of Captain William R. Akers, who organized the Farmers Canal Company to develop irrigation in the valley.<sup>244</sup> The company constructed approximately ten miles of canal before running out of

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<sup>237</sup> U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 36-37; North Platte Valley Museum, *Images of America*, 8.

<sup>238</sup> Young, "The Story of Scottsbluff in Brief," 7-9.

<sup>239</sup> Gering Centennial Committee, *Gering, Nebraska: The First 100 Years* (Dallas: Curtis Media Corporation, 1989), 24; North Platte Valley Museum, *Images of America*, 8; U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 26.

<sup>240</sup> North Platte Valley Museum, *Images of America*, 32.

<sup>241</sup> Gering Centennial Committee, *Gering, Nebraska: the First 100 Years*, 24.

<sup>242</sup> U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 35.

<sup>243</sup> Ramsey, *Scottsbluff: 1900 - 2000*, 11-12.

<sup>244</sup> Ramsey, *Scottsbluff: 1900 - 2000*, 11-12.

funds, but the initial development confirmed the utility of irrigation in the valley and generated interest in further expansion of an irrigation system.<sup>245</sup> The Farmers Canal Company was able to sell its fledgling works to an eastern investor, and the company subsequently succeeded in selling enough bonds to raise roughly \$450,000 for construction of more canals. It built nearly 150 miles of canal over the next two years before a financial panic in 1893 brought expansion to a stop.<sup>246</sup>

Other canal companies began operating in the area before the turn of the century. The Minatare Canal Irrigation Company, Winter Creek Canal Company, and Enterprise Ditch Company all worked toward developing irrigation in the valley, although none successfully completed full irrigation works, due to insufficient funds and a lack of adequate water storage facilities.<sup>247</sup>

In 1895, the Nebraska state legislature provided support for irrigation development, passing an "irrigation district law permitting the formation of districts with power to assess land for irrigation improvements."<sup>248</sup> It was not until the early 1900s, however, that large-scale irrigation development of the North Platte Valley began, due primarily to federal promotion of reclamation. In 1902, Congress passed the Federal Reclamation Act, providing financial support through the sale of public lands for the construction of water storage facilities. The act also provided funds for the survey of lands and subsequent construction of irrigation works to supply water to irrigable lands.<sup>249</sup>

On March 14, 1903, the Secretary of the Interior authorized the North Platte Project, encompassing portions of Wyoming and Nebraska. Initially called the Sweetwater Project, it began with the construction of Pathfinder Dam in Wyoming and the Interstate Canal. Completed in 1927, the project stretched 111 miles along the North Platte River, irrigating nearly 400,000 acres in four irrigation districts, with the city of Scottsbluff virtually at the center of the developed area. The North Platte Project ultimately included over 2,000 miles of canals and laterals, with five reservoirs for water storage.<sup>250</sup>

Three specific canals are directly associated with Scotts Bluff National Monument: the Gering-Fort Laramie Canal, the Mitchell-Gering Canal, and the Central Canal. Constructed between 1915 and 1924, the Gering-Fort Laramie Canal receives water from the North Platte River diverted by the Whalen Diversion Dam, which was constructed in 1909.<sup>251</sup> The canal itself extends 130 miles.<sup>252</sup> It enters the monument in the southeast corner and heads approximately north-northeast before exiting the park.

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<sup>245</sup> Lester A. Danielson, "Irrigation," in Green, *Scottsbluff and the North Platte Valley*, 75.

<sup>246</sup> U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 20; Ramsey, *Scottsbluff: 1900 - 2000*, 12-13.

<sup>247</sup> U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 20.

<sup>248</sup> Gering Centennial Committee, *Gering, Nebraska: the First 100 Years*, 31.

<sup>249</sup> Ramsey, *Scottsbluff: 1900 - 2000*, 14; U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 21; Gering Centennial Committee, *Gering, Nebraska: the First 100 Years*, 31.

<sup>250</sup> Gering Centennial Committee, *Gering, Nebraska: the First 100 Years*, 31-33; Ramsey, *Scottsbluff: 1900 - 2000*, 15; U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 20.

<sup>251</sup> "North Platte Project," File: Irrigation, Vertical Files, North Platte Valley Museum, Gering, Nebraska [NPVM]; Gering Centennial Committee, *Gering, Nebraska: the First 100 Years*, 32.

<sup>252</sup> Gering Centennial Committee, *Gering, Nebraska: the First 100 Years*, 32.

The Mitchell-Gering Canal combined the efforts of two private companies: the Mitchell Irrigation District, organized in 1890, and the Gering Irrigation District, established in 1895. Formed during the push for the development of irrigation in the North Platte Valley, the two districts collectively encompassed over 25,000 acres of land. West of the present monument boundary, the canal falls under the jurisdiction of the Mitchell Irrigation District; the Gering Irrigation District begins at the boundary and continues to the east. The canal enters through the northwest corner of the monument and exits via the northeast corner, traversing badlands along the way. The Gering Irrigation District holds a right-of-way for the canal dating to approximately 1900, with actual construction occurring between 1898 and 1900, although minor changes to its course through the monument have occurred over time.<sup>253</sup>

The Central Canal, operated by the privately held Central Irrigation District, draws directly from the North Platte River near the northern border of the monument and runs parallel to the river in an east-southeast direction out of the park and into Terrytown. The irrigation district formed in the late 1800s and is one of several companies charged with maintaining the Gering Valley Drain Project.<sup>254</sup>

## The Sugar Beet Industry

The development of irrigation triggered an agricultural explosion in the North Platte Valley, of which the most important crop was sugar beets. Even prior to the construction of irrigation canals, farmers in Nebraska had attempted to grow beets. In 1888, the first sugar beet factory in Nebraska, and only the second in the nation, was constructed at Grand Island, but the lack of adequate rainfall proved an obstacle to the successful cultivation of beets.<sup>255</sup> Eager to bolster the development of agriculture within the region, the state of Nebraska instituted “a bounty of one cent per pound” for sugar produced in state.<sup>256</sup> While this initiative led to the construction of additional sugar beet factories in the state, the acreage of beet crops did not increase significantly in the absence of irrigation.<sup>257</sup>

In 1904, on an experimental basis, the Standard Beet Sugar Company issued the first contracts for beets in Scotts Bluff County. Roughly 160 acres were planted that year. The experiment was a success, and irrigation was the deciding factor. It allowed water to be applied when needed and in set amounts, instead of relying on rainfall.<sup>258</sup> Over the next five years, acreage planted to sugar beets increased exponentially, reaching 3,000 acres in 1909.<sup>259</sup>

The success of beet cultivation in the North Platte Valley led the Scottsbluff Chamber of Commerce to pursue local development of the sugar industry proactively. In 1908, the chamber sent a delegation to Great Western Sugar Company’s office in Denver, with the goal of

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<sup>253</sup> Danielson, “Irrigation,” 79-80.

<sup>254</sup> Danielson, “Irrigation,” 79.

<sup>255</sup> U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 42; R. J. Seger, “Beet Sugar Industry of Nebraska,” *Nebraska’s Own Magazine*, October 1929, 26.

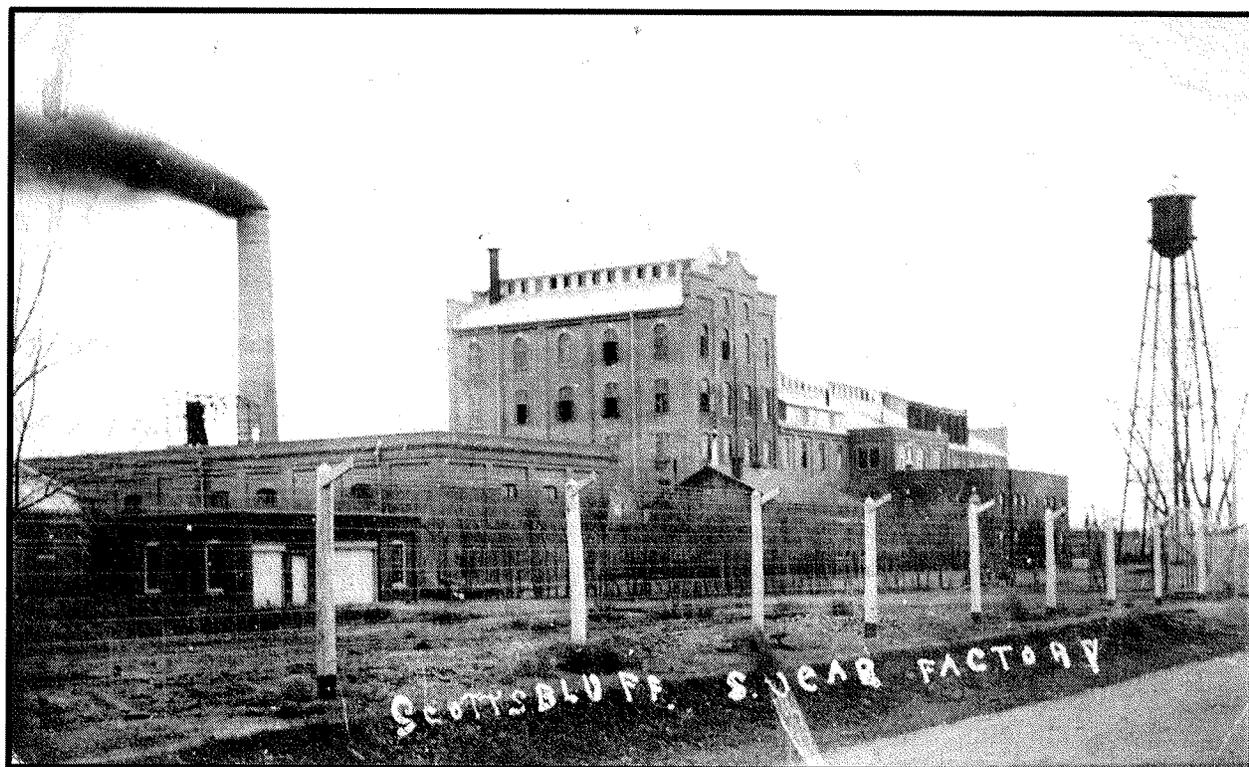
<sup>256</sup> U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 42.

<sup>257</sup> U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 42-43.

<sup>258</sup> U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 43; Seger, “Beet Sugar Industry of Nebraska,” 26.

<sup>259</sup> Seger, “Beet Sugar Industry of Nebraska,” 26.

persuading the company to build a factory in Scottsbluff. The following year, Great Western assigned a representative to Scottsbluff to purchase a factory site and to secure contracts for 12,000 acres of beets. Great Western subsequently relocated a sugar factory from Ames, Nebraska, to Scottsbluff and had it operational in time to process the autumn 1910 harvest.<sup>260</sup>



**Figure 6.1:** Scottsbluff Sugar Factory.

Source: Nebraska State Historical Society, RG 1308, S431-94.

Sugar beets were the catalyst for economic success in the region, with many local communities benefitting from the crop. It was reported that “[s]hortly after the first year of raising beets almost every farmer had established credit and prospered; the towns in the Valley blossomed with the best merchandise; the bank prospered as no where [*sic*] else in the state.”<sup>261</sup> As Robert Young wrote in his brief history of Scottsbluff, “For miles around, farmers hauled sugar beets to the Scottsbluff factory. Many financed their crops at Scottsbluff banks, and most did their trading at Scottsbluff stores.”<sup>262</sup>

The success of Great Western’s facility in Scottsbluff led to further growth of the sugar industry. In 1916, the company constructed a factory in Gering. Four years later, it built a plant in Mitchell. By 1929, sugar beets, the crop that started as a 160-acre experiment had expanded to

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<sup>260</sup> U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 44; Donald E. Christensen, *Coming Home to Scottsbluff, Nebraska: The First One Hundred Years* (Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Company/Publishers, 1999), 73-74; J. C. McCreary, “How the Beet Sugar Industry Came to the North Platte Valley,” in Green, *Scottsbluff and the North Platte Valley*, 51.

<sup>261</sup> As quoted in U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 34-35.

<sup>262</sup> Young, “The Story of Scottsbluff in Brief,” 7-9.

75,000 acres under cultivation within the valley.<sup>263</sup> Sugar beet agriculture was highly profitable and was a key factor in shaping the local economy from 1910 forward.<sup>264</sup>

Although cattle grazing in the region had faded into obscurity toward the end of the 1800s, the rise of agriculture revitalized the local livestock industry.<sup>265</sup> R. J. Seger wrote in 1929,

Stock feeding and dairying are a logical sequence to beet growing. . . . Beet tops, which are left in the fields at the time that the beets are harvested and beet pulp, which is a by-product of the sugar factories, and which can be obtained in either the wet or dried form, make comparatively cheap feeds which are utilized extensively in stock feeding operations. Dairymen also find beet tops and pulp satisfactory feeds for dairy cattle.<sup>266</sup>

Maynard S. Clement commented, "It is truly said 'That the Sugar Beet is two crops in one.' One is a crop of sugar and the other is a crop of stock feed."<sup>267</sup>

Farmers began to raise sheep and cattle on the remnants of sugar beets and crops of alfalfa, and the livestock, in turn, produced much-needed fertilizer for the fields.<sup>268</sup> The offshoot livestock industry prospered and resulted in the development of auctions and packing plants within Scottsbluff and the surrounding communities.<sup>269</sup> The North Platte Valley quickly became "one of the principal beef and lamb producing areas in the United States," with the town of Scottsbluff at the center of the local cattle market.<sup>270</sup> Even on the national market, local stockman Fred Attebery's cattle brought in the top bids in Chicago 167 times between 1928 and 1945.<sup>271</sup>

Other agriculture profited from irrigation development in the valley as well. While alfalfa became a highly valuable crop for the local livestock industry, other products went to broader markets. Potatoes were an early successful commodity. At one time, Scotts Bluff County ranked fourth in the nation in potato production, although planting fields to potatoes has since declined.<sup>272</sup> Along with potatoes, beans became one of the most lucrative crops to come out of the valley. Originally introduced by the Scotts Bluff County Farm Bureau, beans were one of the top three crops in the area by 1927.<sup>273</sup> Grains and corn also flourished in the fertile soil.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> Seger, "Beet Sugar Industry of Nebraska," 26; U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 35.

<sup>264</sup> U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 41.

<sup>265</sup> Christensen, *Coming Home to Scottsbluff*, 80; Young, "The Story of Scottsbluff in Brief," 7-9.

<sup>266</sup> Seger, "Beet Sugar Industry of Nebraska," 27.

<sup>267</sup> Maynard S. Clement, "The Beet Sugar Industry," in Green, *Scottsbluff and the North Platte Valley*, 58.

<sup>268</sup> McCreary, "How the Beet Sugar Industry Came to the North Platte Valley," 55.

<sup>269</sup> Christensen, *Coming Home to Scottsbluff*, 81.

<sup>270</sup> Young, "The Story of Scottsbluff in Brief," 7-9; Christensen, *Coming Home to Scottsbluff*, 81.

<sup>271</sup> Christensen, *Coming Home to Scottsbluff*, 80.

<sup>272</sup> Young, "The Story of Scottsbluff in Brief," 7-9.

<sup>273</sup> Christensen, *Coming Home to Scottsbluff*, 79; Phil Sheldon, "Farming Under Irrigation," in Green, *Scottsbluff and the North Platte Valley*, 43.

<sup>274</sup> Dr. G. E. Condra, "Soils," in *North Platte Valley, Nebraska—Wyoming*, (N.p.: Associated Chambers of Commerce of the North Platte Valley, n.d.), 8; U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 22.

## Labor and Immigration

The development of irrigation and agriculture in the North Platte Valley triggered immigration to the region in the early twentieth century, including an influx of diverse ethnic groups. Sugar beet cultivation required considerable manual labor, with an estimated 200 workers per 1,000 acres of beets in the early twentieth century. When they were not harvesting sugar beets, laborers could work on other local crops—such as potatoes, beans, and alfalfa hay—whose seasonal rhythms dovetailed nicely with beet agriculture. Farm laborers could settle in the Scottsbluff area and find sufficient employment, rather than constantly moving from place to place for work. Foreign immigrants, particularly German-Russians, Japanese, and Mexicans, provided a significant proportion of that labor.<sup>275</sup>

One of the earliest immigrant groups to arrive in the area was Germans from Russia, or German-Russians. These ethnic Germans were descended from immigrants who had originally moved to the Volga River valley of Russia under incentives offered by Catherine the Great in the mid-eighteenth century to foster agricultural settlement. However, increasing political and economic tensions toward the end of the nineteenth century motivated some families to leave Russia in search of better living conditions. Enticed by advertisements for the settlement of the American West, many German-Russians made new homes in Nebraska, in a landscape similar to that of the Russian Steppe.<sup>276</sup> They settled first in the eastern portion of the state and found employment in the sugar beet fields. As the beet industry grew in western Nebraska, the Great Western Sugar Company recognized the need for additional labor. Great Western actively recruited German-Russians to the North Platte Valley because of their sugar beet experience. The immigrants eventually established permanent communities in the region.<sup>277</sup>

In the late 1800s, Japanese immigrants largely worked in the construction of railroads in the Midwest and West, but with the decline in construction they pursued other avenues of employment. Many of them ended up laboring on the sugar beet farms in Colorado.<sup>278</sup> Similar to the German-Russians, Japanese immigrants answered Great Western's call to work in western Nebraska.<sup>279</sup> Japanese farmers did well with sugar beets, with some eventually establishing their own farms. One Japanese immigrant recalled that "at a time when the average sugar beet yield was 15 tons per acre, the Japanese farmers could raise more than 20 tons."<sup>280</sup> Not all Japanese immigrants labored in the sugar beet fields, however. Many entered employment in the meat packing plants of the valley, while still others operated local restaurants and worked as chefs and servers.<sup>281</sup> The Japanese, like the German-Russians, settled permanently in the area.

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<sup>275</sup> Seger, "Beet Sugar Industry of Nebraska," 27; Clement, "The Beet Sugar Industry," 58.

<sup>276</sup> U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 47-49; Sheryll Patterson-Black, *Ethnic Life, Agriculture, and the North Platte Valley* (Crawford, NE: Cottonwood Press, 1984), 10.

<sup>277</sup> U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 47-49; Christensen, *Coming Home to Scottsbluff*, 167-68; Ramsey, *Scottsbluff: 1900 - 2000*, 37.

<sup>278</sup> Ramsey, *Scottsbluff: 1900 - 2000*, 37.

<sup>279</sup> Ramsey, *Scottsbluff: 1900 - 2000*, 37.

<sup>280</sup> Hiram Kano, *A History of the Japanese in Nebraska* (N.p.: Scottsbluff Public Library, 1984), 17

<sup>281</sup> U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 50; Christensen, *Coming Home to Scottsbluff*, 165.

As the early German-Russian and Japanese settlers transitioned into occupations other than sugar beet farming, the demand for field labor again increased. At the same time, Mexicans were moving north to the United States to escape difficult political and economic conditions under the regime of Porfirio Diaz. Great Western turned to these immigrants as a labor resource. During the 1920s, the number of Mexicans working for Great Western was so great that the company constructed housing developments for Mexican laborers on the urban fringe in Scotts Bluff County. Lots sold for \$50, and the more permanent nature of these communities led to a significant Mexican presence within the valley.<sup>282</sup>

The influx of immigrants in the region occurred during a general population boom arising from the developing agricultural economy of the North Platte Valley. From 1910 through 1930, the population of Scotts Bluff County alone grew by over 20,000 people, from roughly 8,300 inhabitants in 1910 to over 28,500 residents two decades later. Aside from the increase in the immigrant population, American Indians lived and worked in the agricultural economy of the valley as well, working in potato and sugar beet fields alongside their foreign counterparts.<sup>283</sup> As populations increased, the agricultural economy burgeoned, and the North Platte Valley began to take on its present-day appearance.

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<sup>282</sup> U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 52-53.

<sup>283</sup> U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, 22; Christensen, *Coming Home to Scottsbluff*, 168.

## 7. Establishment and Development of Scotts Bluff National Monument

### Early Efforts to Commemorate the Oregon Trail

As the North Platte Valley modernized, residents began to appreciate the symbolic value of the region's past. The significance of the Oregon Trail and the role the route played in western migration was an important historical theme, especially in Nebraska. The Oregon Trail Memorial Commission, founded in the early 1900s, sought to locate the trail within Nebraska where it still existed and to place commemorative markers along its route.<sup>284</sup> In 1912, the Nebraska Memorial Association commissioned a series of granite markers to be placed along the Oregon Trail and at various historic sites. On October 18, 1912, the text for the Mitchell Pass marker was given to Kimball Brothers of Lincoln, Nebraska, for inscribing. Although the marker itself is dated 1912, it appears that it was not officially set until 1913.<sup>285</sup> The 1912 marker, which was placed at the base of Scotts Bluff near Mitchell Pass, was the first formal, permanent acknowledgment of the importance of the Oregon Trail in the Scotts Bluff vicinity.



**Figure 7.1:** 1912 Oregon Trail Marker at Scotts Bluff National Monument.

*Transcription:* Oregon Trail marked by the State of Nebraska 1912. Trail passed 37 feet north of this point. Mitchell Pass. Photo credit: Emily Greenwald, 2010.

<sup>284</sup> Nebraska State Historical Society, "Finding Aid for Collection RG3908.AM: Nebraska Memorial Association (Neb.)," <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/research/manuscripts/organize/nebraska-memorial.htm>; Nebraska State Historical Society, "Finding Aid for Collection RG2347.AM: Oregon Trail Memorial Commission (Neb.)," <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/research/manuscripts/organize/oregontrail.htm>.

<sup>285</sup> Andrea Faling, Nebraska State Historical Society, to Natalie Perrin, June 16, 2011.

## Creation of the National Monument

Congress created the earliest national parks in a piecemeal fashion, through the exercise of what historian Alfred Runte called “scenic nationalism.”<sup>286</sup> Parks were created from lands thought to be worthless except for their scenic value.<sup>287</sup> Through the 1906 American Antiquities Act, Congress sought to extend federal protection to historic and prehistoric resources on public lands, which were then being looted and destroyed.<sup>288</sup> The act authorized the president of the United States to declare and reserve historic landmarks and “other objects of historic or scientific interest” on federal land as national monuments.<sup>289</sup> In 1914, Senator G. M. Hitchcock of Nebraska made the first formal suggestion to create such a monument at Scotts Bluff. Hitchcock explained that the mayor of Scottsbluff supported the idea. Congressman Moses P. Kinkaid of Nebraska made a similar proposition in early 1916.<sup>290</sup>

Congress created the NPS in 1916, with the duty to

promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations hereinafter specified by such means and measures as conform to the fundamental purpose of the said parks, monuments, and reservations, which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.<sup>291</sup>

Following this legislation, the number of national parks and monuments began to grow more rapidly. Supporters of a national park or monument at Scotts Bluff stepped up their efforts in response. Local leaders in Gering and Scottsbluff petitioned NPS Director Stephen Mather in 1918, and Secretary of the Interior Franklin Lane subsequently requested an investigation into the feasibility of a national park or monument.<sup>292</sup> Historian Alicia Barber noted that “coordinated local efforts, not federal initiative,” led to the more serious consideration of Scotts Bluff for designation as an NPS unit.<sup>293</sup> Although some within the Department of the Interior questioned Scotts Bluff’s significance, Mather favored its protection as a national monument for its association with the Oregon Trail and its potential for tourist development.<sup>294</sup>

President Woodrow Wilson created Scotts Bluff National Monument by Proclamation No. 1547 on December 12, 1919.<sup>295</sup> Although he declared Scotts Bluff to be “the highest known

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<sup>286</sup> Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*, 3d edition (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 71.

<sup>287</sup> Runte, *National Parks*, 48-49.

<sup>288</sup> Dwight F. Rettie, *Our National Park System: Caring for America’s Greatest Natural and Historic Treasures* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 4-5.

<sup>289</sup> Act of June 8, 1906 (American Antiquities Act), 34 Stat. 225.

<sup>290</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 11-12.

<sup>291</sup> Act of August 25, 1916, 39 Stat. 535.

<sup>292</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 12.

<sup>293</sup> Alicia Barber, “Local Places, National Spaces: Public Memory, Community Identity, and Landscape at Scotts Bluff National Monument,” *American Studies* 45, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 40.

<sup>294</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 13-14; Barber, “Local Places, National Spaces,” 41.

<sup>295</sup> Proclamation 1547, December 12, 1919, 41 Stat. 1779.

point within the State of Nebraska,” this was an error.<sup>296</sup> But the proclamation provided additional justifications:

Whereas Mitchell Pass, lying to the south of said bluff, was traversed by the Old Oregon Trail and said bluff was used as a landmark and rendezvous by thousands of immigrants and frontiersmen travelling said trail enroute for new homes in the Northwest; and

Whereas, in view of these facts, as well as of the scientific interest the region possesses from a geological standpoint, it appears that the public interests will be promoted by reserving the lands upon which said bluff and the said pass are located as a national monument . . . .<sup>297</sup>

The original boundaries of the monument encompassed 2,053.83 acres. In 1924, President Calvin Coolidge removed 160 acres from the monument by executive order. In 1932, Herbert Hoover added nearly 1,900 acres, consisting of “certain adjoining lands for administrative purposes and the protection of a certain approach highway and additional features of scientific interest . . . .” Franklin Delano Roosevelt added a little over 53 acres in 1940, including public lands adjacent to the monument and islands in the North Platte River. A resurvey of the boundaries in 1935 resulted in an increase of 182.90 acres. In 1944, the monument contained 3,476.27 acres, 1,184.12 acres of which were private inholdings.<sup>298</sup>

Early development at and near the monument was largely the product of local initiative. A foot trail predated creation of the monument, and picnic tables had been placed at its base by 1921.<sup>299</sup> Railroad companies and private concessionaires, typically the entities interested in developing park sites at that time, did not step in to create infrastructure. But, as Alicia Barber explained,

community groups and individuals . . . personally funded many improvements to the original picnic area and the foot trail to the summit. Locals installed a rifle range and modest country club, complete with nine-hole golf course, all on monument grounds.<sup>300</sup>

They also lobbied for a road to the summit of Scotts Bluff. Barber noted that local supporters of the monument sought to draw in tourists, particularly “those interested in American heritage and liberated by their private cars to explore these interests.”<sup>301</sup> They found a champion in Willie Major (Will) Maupin, the first custodian of Scotts Bluff National Monument and editor of the *Gering Midwest*. Although the NPS did not support such a road, local residents continued to push for it.<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> The text of the proclamation can be found in Appendix B of Ron Cockrell, “Scotts Bluff National Monument, Nebraska: An Administrative History, 1960–1983,” (Omaha: National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, 1983), [http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/scbl/adhi/adhi.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/scbl/adhi/adhi.htm).

<sup>297</sup> Cockrell, “Scotts Bluff National Monument, Nebraska: An Administrative History.”

<sup>298</sup> Executive Order No. 4008, May 9, 1924; Proclamation No. 1999, June 1, 1932, 47 Stat. 2512; Proclamation No. 2391, March 29, 1940, 54 Stat. 2690; Merrill J. Mattes, Custodian, to Superintendent, Rocky Mountain National Park, November 20, 1944, File: “101 History—General (1 of 2),” Box 196, Scotts Bluff National Monument, National Parks and Monuments Central Classified Files, 1936–1952, Record Group 79: Records of the National Park Service [RG 79], National Archives and Records Administration—Central Plains Region, Kansas City, Missouri [NARA-CPR].

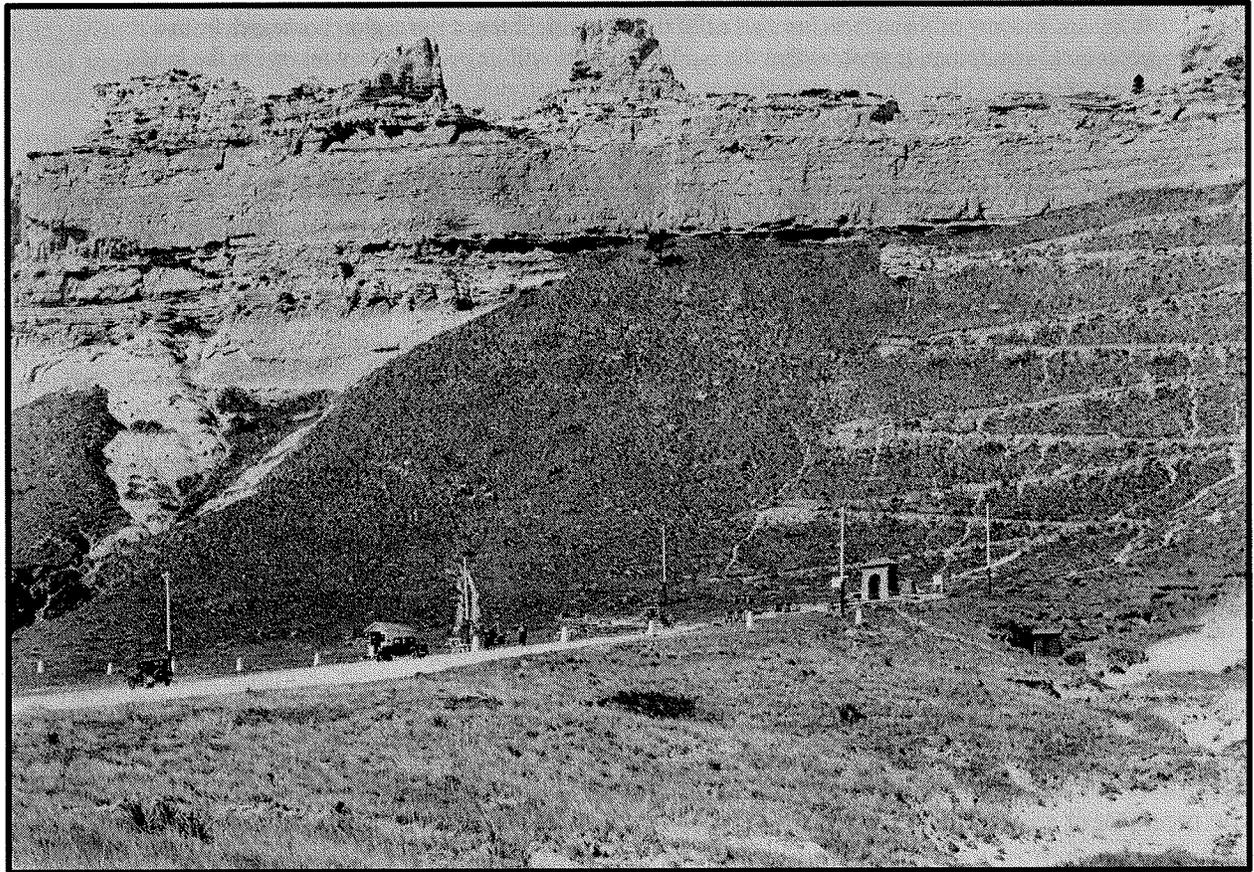
<sup>299</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 18.

<sup>300</sup> Barber, “Local Places, National Spaces,” 44.

<sup>301</sup> Barber, “Local Places, National Spaces,” 44–45.

<sup>302</sup> Barber, “Local Places, National Spaces,” 45–46; Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 14, 16.

In 1926, the NPS provided \$500 to improve the existing trail to the summit, “contingent on the local community’s ability to raise an equal amount.”<sup>303</sup> Bert Burrell, an NPS engineer stationed at Yellowstone, designed the new trail, characterized by sharp switchbacks zig-zagging up the bluff face. After the remaining \$500 was raised in 1927, local Boy Scouts helped build the trail, which became known alternately as the Zig Zag Trail or the Boy Scout Trail.<sup>304</sup>



**Figure 7.2:** Zig Zag Trail, 1932.

Source: Administrative History Photographs, Scotts Bluff National Monument, sb2609.

In 1930, the Daughters of the American Revolution sponsored the construction of a stone arch at the entrance of the trail to memorialize Hiram Scott (Memorial Arch). A plaque was also installed in a boulder placed near the arch. William Henry Jackson attended the 1930 dedication.<sup>305</sup> The NPS later relocated the boulder to Scotts Spring and ultimately removed it. The plaque was moved to the summit in 1959.<sup>306</sup> Although the NPS later acquired the land in this area, it chose not to maintain development there and has allowed the Memorial Arch to deteriorate on site.

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<sup>303</sup> Custodian to Files, July 24, 1941, File: 640 Trails and Bridges, Box 200, Scotts Bluff National Monument, National Parks and Monuments Central Classified Files, 1936–1952, RG 79, NARA-CPR; Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 19.

<sup>304</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 19-21.

<sup>305</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 22-23.

<sup>306</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 42.



**Figure 7.3:** Scott Memorial Arch and Plaque.

Source: Administrative History Photographs, Scotts Bluff National Monument, sb2610

The Park Service closed the Zig Zag Trail in 1953, in part because of its visual intrusion on the landscape, and in part because a 1933 boundary survey indicated that the trail and picnic grounds were on private land.<sup>307</sup> By the time it was closed, the trail had been etched into the east face of Scotts Bluff so deeply that it is still visible today.

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<sup>307</sup> National Park Service, Great Plains Support Office, Cultural Landscapes Program, "Scotts Bluff National Monument, Nebraska: Cultural Landscape Inventory," 1996, 17 [hereafter cited as "Cultural Landscape Inventory"]; Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 31.



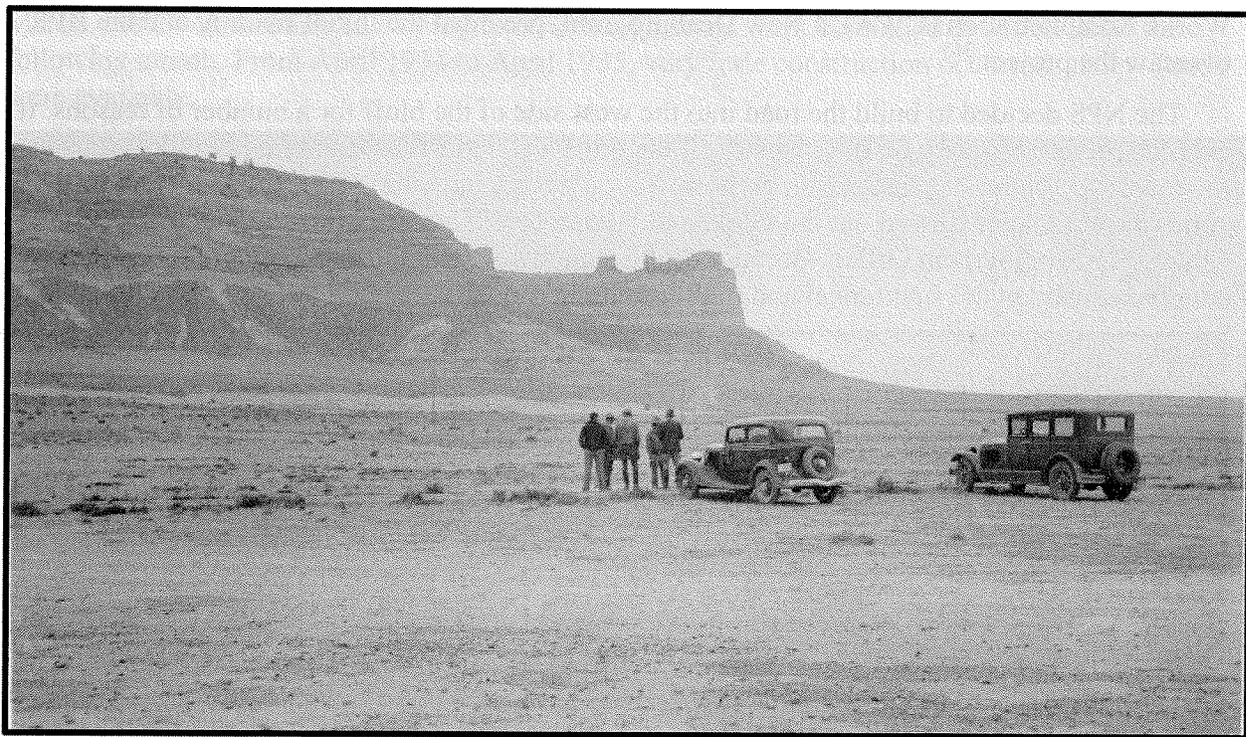
**Figure 7.4:** Zig Zag Trail and Memorial Arch Ruins.  
Photo credit: Natalie Perrin, 2011.

## **New Deal Construction, 1933-1939**

The first major building campaign at Scotts Bluff occurred during and because of the New Deal. In an effort to lift the United States out of economic depression, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Congress launched a series of relief programs starting in 1933, several of which provided work for the unemployed. Young men, in particular, were put to work on infrastructure projects at NPS sites, such as the Grand Canyon and Acadia.<sup>308</sup> At Scotts Bluff, projects included a road to the summit, trails, an Oregon Trail museum, and administrative facilities.

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<sup>308</sup> National Park Service, "Grand Canyon Civilian Conservation Corps," <http://www.nps.gov/grca/historyculture/ccs.htm>; National Park Service, "Civilian Conservation Corps-Acadia National Park," <http://www.nps.gov/acad/historyculture/ccs.htm>.



**Figure 7.5:** View to North Before Museum Construction, 1935.

Source: Administrative History Photographs, Scotts Bluff National Monument, sb2615.

Early construction at Scotts Bluff fit into the “rustic” style that the NPS favored at the time. In 1935, architect Albert Good wrote that rustic style, “through the use of native materials in proper scale, and through the avoidance of rigid straight lines, and over-sophistication, gives the feeling of having been executed by pioneer craftsmen with limited hand tools. It thus achieves sympathy with natural surroundings and with the past.”<sup>309</sup> NPS landscape architects also emphasized naturalistic roads in this period. Through careful engineering, they sought to blend roads into the surrounding vegetation and landforms, improving visitors’ aesthetic experiences while also preventing erosion.<sup>310</sup>

Local supporters of a road to the summit found a federal ally in Horace Albright, who became director of the NPS in 1931. While visiting Scotts Bluff that year, Albright expressed support for a summit road on the condition “that it is feasible both from the standpoint of engineering and of preservation of the landscape features of the Bluff.” He formally approved the road in March 1932.<sup>311</sup> The Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) had actually begun surveys in 1931, before Albright’s visit, but lack of funding delayed construction until 1933.<sup>312</sup> The Civil

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<sup>309</sup> As quoted in Linda Flint McClelland, *Building the National Parks Historic Landscape Design and Construction* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 434.

<sup>310</sup> McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 201-11.

<sup>311</sup> Alicia Barber, “Scotts Bluff Summit Road, HAER No. NE-11,” *Historic American Engineering Record*, 2000, 18. Barber describes Albright’s role in greater detail in “Local Places, National Spaces,” 48-49.

<sup>312</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 25-27.

Works Administration (CWA), a New Deal program, provided the initial funding and the BPR oversaw the project.<sup>313</sup>

The NPS decided to build the road into the west side of the bluff for a number of reasons. It avoided private property on the east side of the bluff, offered a reasonable road grade, allowed the road to be better obscured from view, and avoided any potential impacts to Mitchell Pass.<sup>314</sup> A private contractor carried out the work, and laborers were hired through the Scotts Bluff County Re-Employment Office. Because of the manpower available, construction began simultaneously on the first tunnel and the summit parking area.<sup>315</sup>



**Figure 7.6:** Summit Road and Trail.

Photo credit: Emily Greenwald, 2010.

Work completed between 1933 and 1934 included the summit parking area, two of the three tunnels, and a new trail to the summit featuring a tunnel through a fin on the bluff's east side.<sup>316</sup> Difficulties arose in early 1934, when the CWA began to run into funding ceilings. At the end of

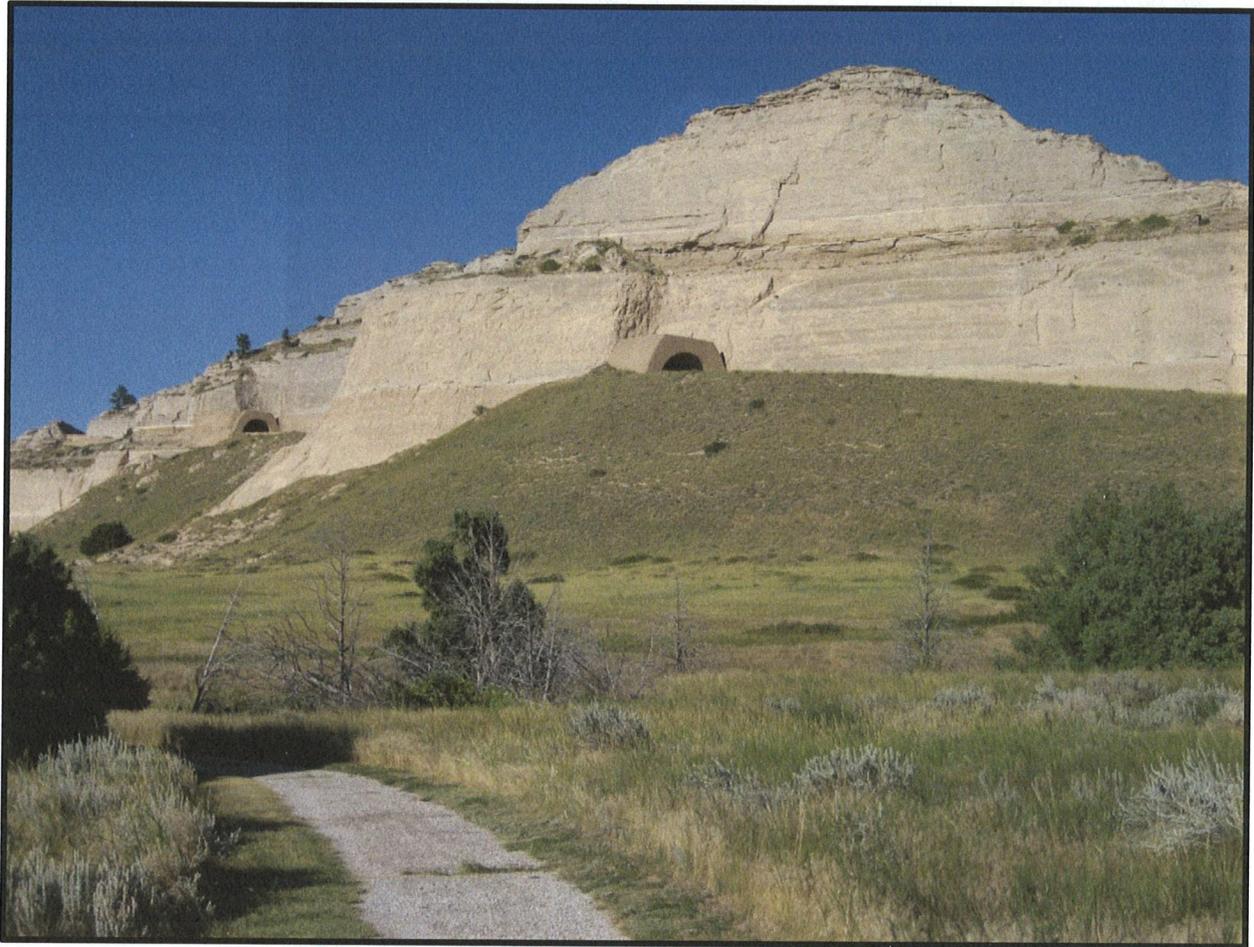
<sup>313</sup> Barber, "Local Places, National Spaces," 50, 53.

<sup>314</sup> Cockrell, "Scotts Bluff National Monument, Nebraska: An Administrative History"; Barber, "Scotts Bluff Summit Road, HAER No. NE-11," 19.

<sup>315</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 27-28.

<sup>316</sup> Barber, "Local Places, National Spaces," 53; Barber, "Scotts Bluff Summit Road, HAER No. NE-11," 22.

March, the CWA terminated its programs, although some work continued at Scotts Bluff the following month. From April 1934 to April 1935, very little construction occurred, as few funds were available.<sup>317</sup>



**Figure 7.7:** Tunnels on Summit Road.  
Photo credit: Emily Greenwald, 2010.

The NPS obtained Emergency Appropriation Act funds to resume the work in December 1934, and additional funding subsequently came from the Public Works Administration. Men employed by the Emergency Relief Administration (ERA) supplied the initial labor. But when a stoppage of work led to the ERA crews being reassigned, Scotts Bluff Custodian Harold Cook recruited men from the Emergency Conservation Work program, resulting in the establishment of a CCC camp at Scotts Bluff in May 1935.<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>317</sup> Barber, "Scotts Bluff Summit Road, HAER No. NE-11," 23, 25; Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 30.

<sup>318</sup> Barber, "Scotts Bluff Summit Road, HAER No. NE-11," 25-27.



**Figure 7.8:** Pedestrian Tunnel on Trail to Summit.  
Photo credit: Emily Greenwald, 2010.

The CCC, created in 1933, organized young, unemployed men into a labor force along military lines and put them to work on conservation and construction projects. Franklin Roosevelt had begun a similar program as governor of New York, using the unemployed for “reforestation projects clearing underbrush, fighting fires, controlling insects, constructing roads and trails, improving forest ponds and lakes, and developing recreation facilities.”<sup>319</sup> Upon becoming president in 1933, Roosevelt called for 500,000 men to be trained by the army and

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<sup>319</sup> John C. Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service, 1933–1942* (N.p.: National Park Service, 1985), 3.

then put to work on projects overseen by the departments of Agriculture and Interior.<sup>320</sup> On March 31, 1933, he signed the Emergency Conservation Work Act, which authorized relief for the unemployed by putting them to work “for the restoration of the country’s depleted natural resources and the advancement of an orderly program of useful public works . . . .”<sup>321</sup> The NPS responded quickly to the new legislation, developing CCC work programs out of its master plans for various parks.<sup>322</sup>



**Figure 7.9:** CCC Boys Making Bricks.  
Source: Photograph Files, North Platte Valley Museum.

In 1935, Company 762 of the CCC was stationed at Red Cloud, Nebraska. It was due to relocate to the Ozarks, but “[a] last minute change in travelling orders resulted in the transfer of the Red Cloud unit of 200 men here,” a newspaper article reported.<sup>323</sup> The company established CCC Camp #NM-1 in the badlands area, between the bluff and the North Platte River. The camp

<sup>320</sup> Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service*, 7.

<sup>321</sup> Act of March 31, 1933, 48 Stat. 22; Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service*, 7-10.

<sup>322</sup> Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service*, 38.

<sup>323</sup> “CCC Unit Expected Here by Thursday,” clipping from unidentified newspaper, May 19, 1935, File: C.C.C. Camps, Vertical Files, NPVM; “CCC Group Starts Task at Campsite,” clipping from unidentified newspaper, June 30, 1935, File: C.C.C. Camps, Vertical Files, NPVM.

was reachable by a ditch rider's road paralleling the Gering Canal. CCC men completed construction of the camp barracks in August 1935, using adobe bricks that they fabricated on site.<sup>324</sup>



**Figure 7.10:** Camp NM #1 from North.

Source: Administrative History Photographs, Scotts Bluff National Monument, sb2652.

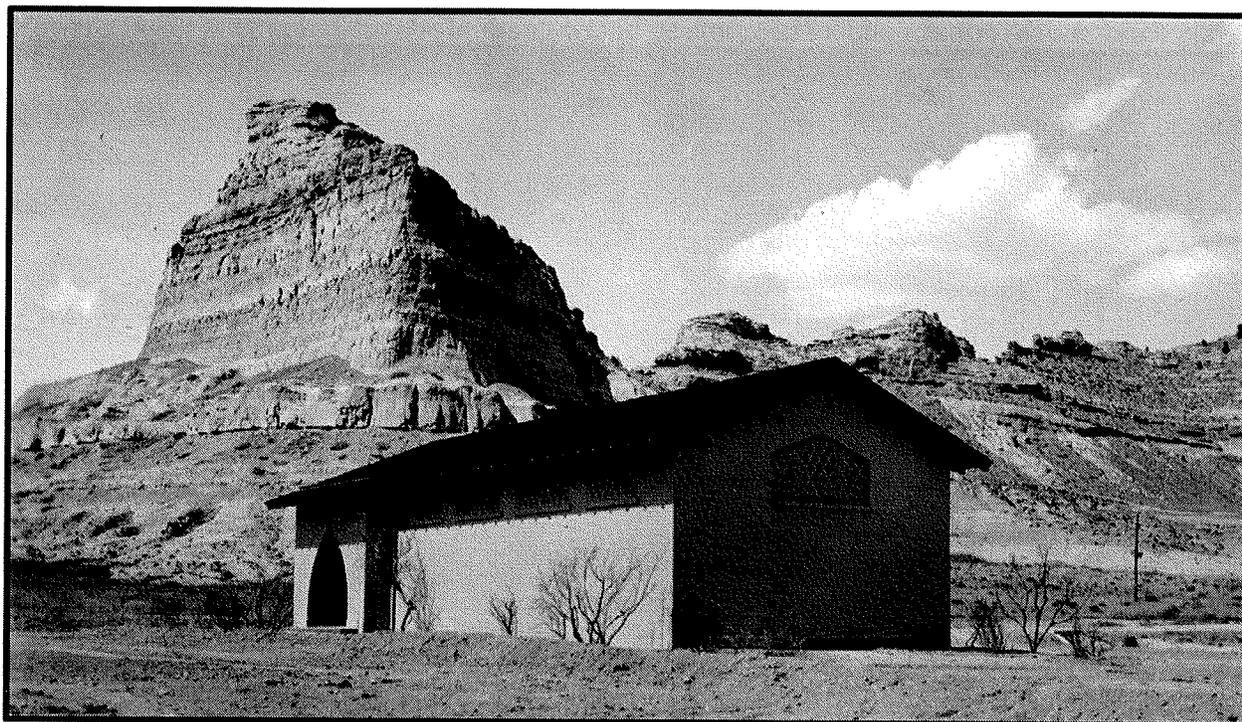
Although the CCC camp “was evidently intended to be semi-permanent,” according to historian Earl Harris, it was later removed.<sup>325</sup> Construction of the first truly permanent building at the monument, the Oregon Trail Museum, began in 1935. NPS landscape architect Howard W. Baker designed the structure, and CCC enrollees built it, using traditional brick. Although the NPS had intended to build a ranger’s residence and comfort station the same year, funding permitted only the completion of the first unit of the museum.<sup>326</sup> The museum was finished on June 21, 1935, and opened to the public on July 16, 1936. William Henry Jackson spoke at the dedication on that day, which was timed to coincide with the annual Oregon Trail Days celebration in Gering. Permanent exhibits were installed by October 1936.<sup>327</sup> From the start, the

<sup>324</sup> Barber, “Scotts Bluff Summit Road, HAER No. NE-11,” 27; Alan W. O’Bright, “Trail Oasis: Historic Structure Report, Visitor Center (HS-2), Scotts Bluff National Monument, Gering, Nebraska,” November 2001, 31.

<sup>325</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 31. The CCC departed in 1938 and the camp structures were removed the following year. Harris, 38-39.

<sup>326</sup> O’Bright, “Trail Oasis,” 18-19.

museum interpreted the broader history of overland migration, rather than focusing on the specific history of Scotts Bluff.<sup>328</sup>



**Figure 7.11:** Oregon Trail Museum, circa 1936.  
Source: Nebraska State Historical Society, RG 1308, S431-1.

Also in 1935, the CCC continued work on the summit road, built a water supply system, installed boundary fences, and created a new picnic area west of Mitchell Pass and south of the road (now Old Oregon Trail).<sup>329</sup> Construction of the Summit Road finished in 1937, and the park service opened it for use on September 19, 1937.<sup>330</sup>

Construction of the next segment of the Visitor Center and Museum occurred between 1937 and 1938.<sup>331</sup> Although the 1935 section had been built of traditional brick, the addition and other contemporary structures at the monument were built with adobe brick manufactured on site. A stucco surface unites the different sections. In a study of the Visitor Center, NPS historical architect Al O'Bright theorized that Baker might have had in mind Nebraska sod houses or Spanish colonial style, then experiencing a revival, when he designed the monument's administrative area. O'Bright also noted similarities between the Visitor Center and the historic,

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<sup>327</sup> Chas. E. Randles, Superintendent's Narrative Report, October 1936, File: Custodian's Monthly Report (1935-36), Box 1, Series 1, Administrative Subject Files 1933-1969, Scotts Bluff National Monument, RG 79, NARA-CPR; "Key Events in the History of Scotts Bluff," *Prairie Magazine*, August 1991, 7, File: Museum Development, Manuscript File, Curatorial Files, SBNM; Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 36-37.

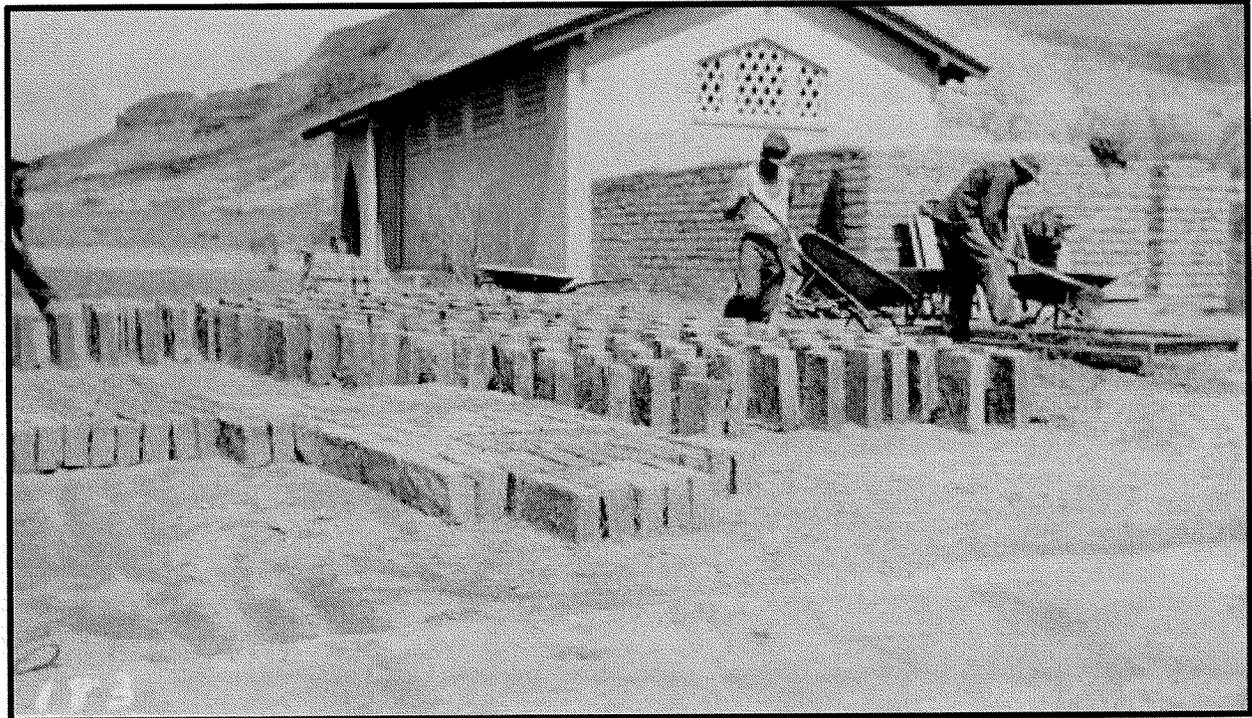
<sup>328</sup> Barber, "Local Places, National Spaces," 53.

<sup>329</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 34.

<sup>330</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 37.

<sup>331</sup> O'Bright, "Trail Oasis," 19.

non-extant Fort Mitchell, as William Henry Jackson had depicted it in 1866 drawings. O'Bright commented, "Whether Baker knew of these drawings prior to his design work is unknown."<sup>332</sup>



**Figure 7.12:** Construction of Adobe Brick Addition to Oregon Trail Museum, 1937.

Source: Administrative History Photographs, SBNM, sb183.

The decision to use adobe appears to have been largely a function of cost. Assistant Landscape Architect S. Serrano explained,

Last summer the existing museum unit was completed at an approximate cost of \$9,000.00. The funds were secured through a P.W.A. allotment. Only a portion of the proposed museum building was completed because the lack of funds made its completion impossible at that time. . . .

Shortly after completion of that portion of the museum building of which I have spoken Chief Architect Vint visited Scotts Bluff National Monument. Feeling that it would be extremely difficult and perhaps impossible to obtain additional P.W.A. allotments for the completion of the museum and other proposed headquarters area buildings; the idea occurred to him that our plans for the contemplated combined headquarters and utility groups could be made to materialize by adopting adobe as a building material and doing the work under E.C.W. He reasoned that in that way and that way alone could our plans for a completed headquarters development become a reality.

We all know that Scotts Bluff lies in an area where sod house civilization prevailed in the early days when Nebraska was in its first stage of development. We are also aware of the fact that adobe buildings are typical of [the] southwestern United States and decidedly foreign to the Scotts Bluff region. Mr. Vint recommended the adoption of adobe as a building material not because he considers it appropriate for that area, but because it was the only way in which comparatively long lasting headquarters buildings could be constructed under the existing E.C.W. limitations. The use

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<sup>332</sup> O'Bright, "Trail Oasis," 24-25.

of adobe was suggested only as a last resort. If adequate funds had been available regular brick would have been used throughout the entire headquarters development.<sup>333</sup>

Howard Baker later noted that the building would be stuccoed to integrate the regular brick and adobe sections.<sup>334</sup> This idea appears to have originated with George Nason, the NPS regional landscape architect in Omaha.<sup>335</sup>

In 1937, Merrill Mattes catalogued the work underway, including a geology and paleontology wing for the museum.<sup>336</sup> He wrote,

The present museum wing is made of standard brick. Additional units at the headquarters area are or will be made of sun-baked adobe brick (native Brule clay mixed with straw). Units completed (May 1937) are an equipment shed and adobe walls forming utility courts. Units to be finished this summer include an additional museum wing, ranger's office and quarters, custodian's office and work-room, ranger's residence and double comfort station.<sup>337</sup>

Additions to the museum building, along with the Ranger's Residence (which now serves as Administrative Offices), were completed in 1938 in a similar adobe style.<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>333</sup> S. Serrano, Assistant Landscape Architect, to Howard W. Baker, Resident Landscape Architect, June 23, 1936, File: 621 CCC Projects 5/36 Thru 2 of 2, Box 199, Scotts Bluff National Monument, National Parks and Monuments Central Classified Files, 1936-1952, RG 79, NARA-CPR.

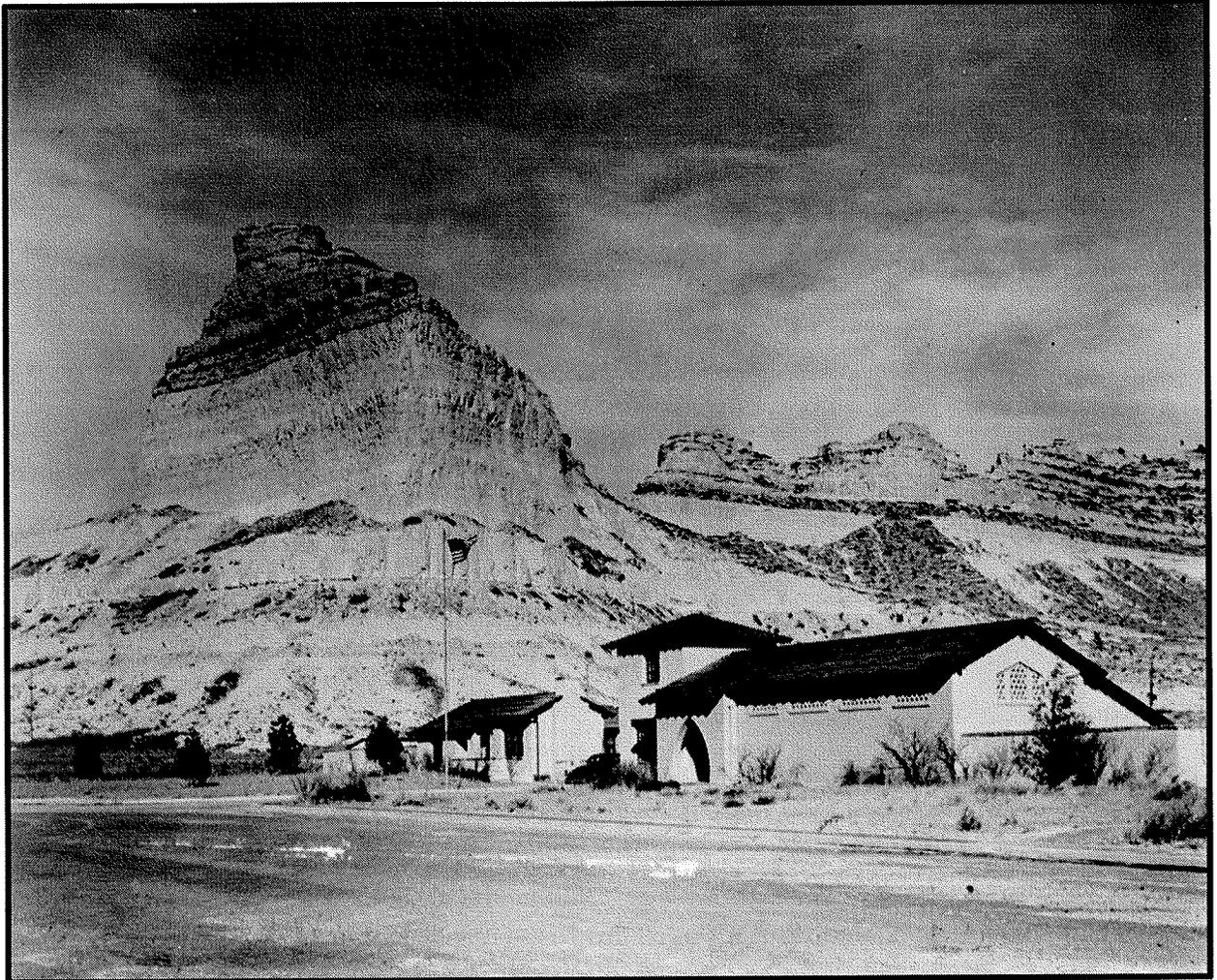
<sup>334</sup> Howard Baker, District Landscape Architect, to George Nason, Regional Landscape Architect, October 8, 1936, 1, File: 621 CCC Projects 5/36 Thru 2 of 2, Box 199, Scotts Bluff National Monument, National Parks and Monuments Central Classified Files, 1936-1952, RG 79, NARA-CPR.

<sup>335</sup> George Nason for Paul V. Brown to Howard W. Baker, Resident Landscape Architect, Rocky Mountain National Park, July 7, 1938, File: 621 CCC Projects 5/36 Thru 2 of 2, Box 199, Scotts Bluff National Monument, National Parks and Monuments Central Classified Files, 1936-1952, RG 79, NARA-CPR.

<sup>336</sup> Merrill J. Mattes, comp., "Handbook for Enrollee Guides, Scotts Bluff National Monument," May 17, 1937, 9, File: "000 General Corr.," Box 196, Scotts Bluff National Monument, National Parks and Monuments Central Classified Files, 1936-1952, RG 79, NARA-CPR.

<sup>337</sup> Merrill J. Mattes, comp., "Handbook for Enrollee Guides, Scotts Bluff National Monument," May 17, 1937, 10, File: "000 General Corr.," Box 196, Scotts Bluff National Monument, National Parks and Monuments Central Classified Files, 1936-1952, RG 79, NARA-CPR.

<sup>338</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 39.



**Figure 7.13:** Visitor Center and Museum, Ranger's Residence, circa 1938.  
Source: Nebraska State Historical Society, RG1308-02, S431-2.

The CCC continued to work on various projects at the monument between 1936 and 1938, including the restoration of Scotts Spring in 1936. A document from the CCC camp explained that the spring “has been trapped into an unsightly mud puddle by cattle, [in] recent years. As this is on the trail to the Summit, it is highly important that this be cleaned up, be cemented, and put into practical condition, for use and made a slightly attraction, instead of an unsightly mud hole, and its fine water again be made available for use.”<sup>339</sup> Following the project’s completion, Howard Baker commented, “The Scotts spring which was formerly a water hole for cattle in this region has been excavated and collected into [a] small basin and now produces a very nice flow of water.”<sup>340</sup>

<sup>339</sup> Scotts Bluff National Monument Camp NM-1, Sixth Enrollment Period Starting October 1, 1935, Justifications, Box 199, Scotts Bluff National Monument, National Parks and Monuments Central Classified Files, 1936–1952, RG 79, NARA-CPR.

<sup>340</sup> Howard Baker, District Landscape Architect, to George Nason, Regional Landscape Architect, October 8, 1936, 2, File: 621 CCC Projects 5/36 Thru 2 of 2, Box 199, Scotts Bluff National Monument, National Parks and Monuments Central Classified Files, 1936–1952, RG 79, NARA-CPR.

The CCC company departed in 1938, although Works Progress Administration (WPA) laborers completed some additional projects in 1939.<sup>341</sup> On July 2, 1940, District Engineer Clifford Shoemaker completed a final inspection of the road.<sup>342</sup> This marked the end of the first construction campaign at Scotts Bluff. The new road and museum appear to have helped to boost visitation at Scotts Bluff. While approximately 10,000 people visited the monument in 1934, the annual figure climbed during the 1930s and reached 82,305 in 1939.<sup>343</sup>

## Development and Undevelopment, 1940-1955

Little further development of the monument occurred in the 1940s, but patterns of use became established during this decade, which the NPS responded to by altering the built landscape. Local users, rather than passing tourists, largely drove these changes. While the NPS built some additional infrastructure, such as enlarging the summit parking lot, it increasingly sought to remove damaging or nonconforming facilities, in the interest of protecting the environment and maintaining consistency with the monument's purpose.

From 1939 to 1951, the All-American Soap Box Derby held an annual race at the bottom of the Summit Road, drawing thousands of spectators from the surrounding area. Park service staff were uneasy with this use of the monument and regularly expressed concern about the potential environmental damage.<sup>344</sup> They did their best to control the impacts of the crowd and the huge number of cars the spectators parked at the site. The Soap Box Derby was not held in 1952, which Regional Director Howard Baker called good news, praising the Scotts Bluff superintendent for "eliminating this type of use from the Monument."<sup>345</sup>

Other popular events included sunrise Easter services on the bluff, company and family picnics, and gatherings of such organizations as the Nebraska Council of Women's Demonstration Project Clubs and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of Nebraska and Wyoming.<sup>346</sup> The thousands of cars that arrived for such events did serious environmental damage and left permanent scars on the landscape. The NPS enlarged the summit parking lot in 1940 in order to accommodate visitor use.<sup>347</sup> Merrill Mattes later reflected on the problem, noting, "We had some terrible traffic jams. You'd have cars waiting to get up there and Rangers trying to encourage people to get on out of there. People didn't want to. They'd spend the day."<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 42.

<sup>342</sup> Barber, "Scotts Bluff Summit Road, HAER No. NE-11," 44.

<sup>343</sup> Cockrell, "Scotts Bluff National Monument, Nebraska: An Administrative History," Appendix F, [http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/scbl/adhi/appf.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/scbl/adhi/appf.htm).

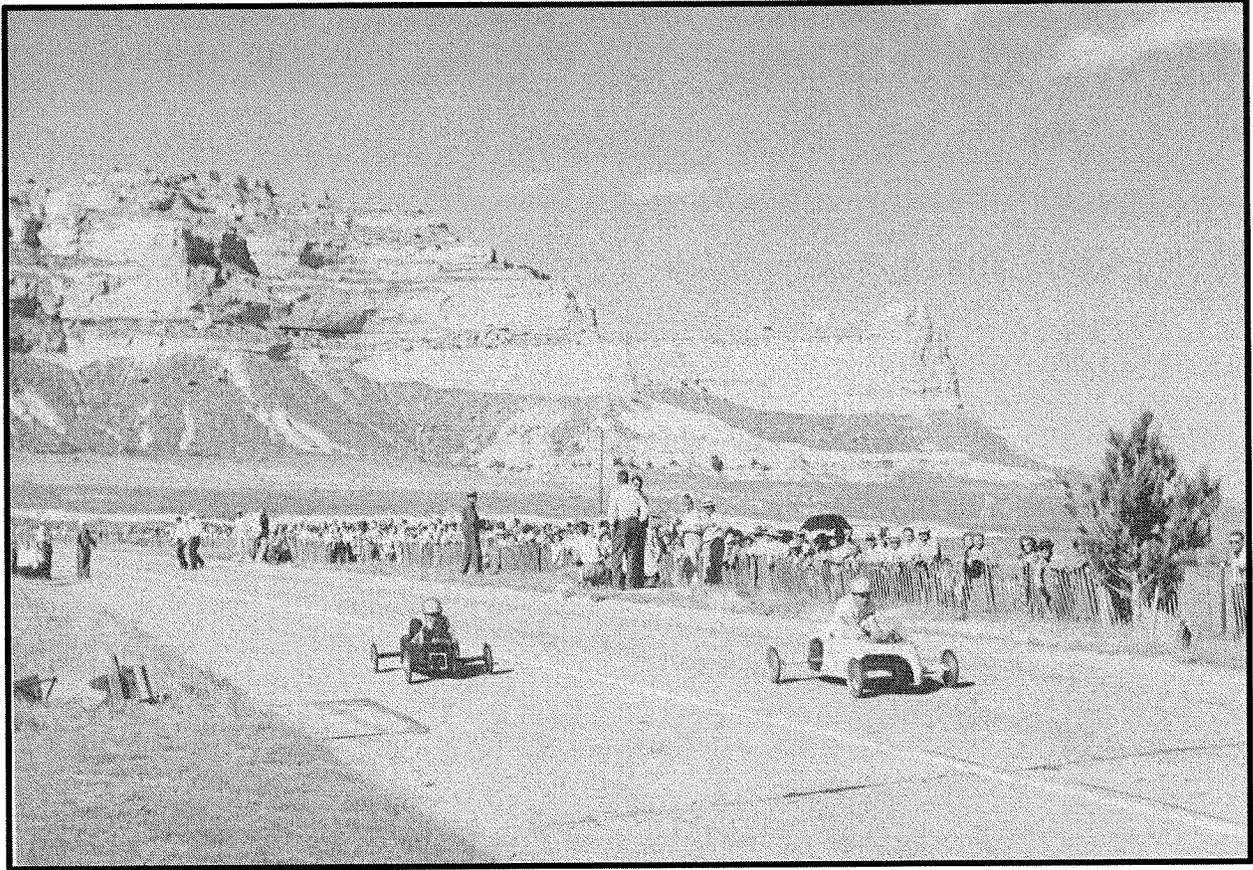
<sup>344</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 43-44; Barber, "Local Places, National Spaces," 56.

<sup>345</sup> Howard W. Baker, Regional Director, to Superintendent, Scotts Bluff National Monument, April 4, 1952, File: [missing label, subject is Soap Box Derby], Curatorial Files, SBNM.

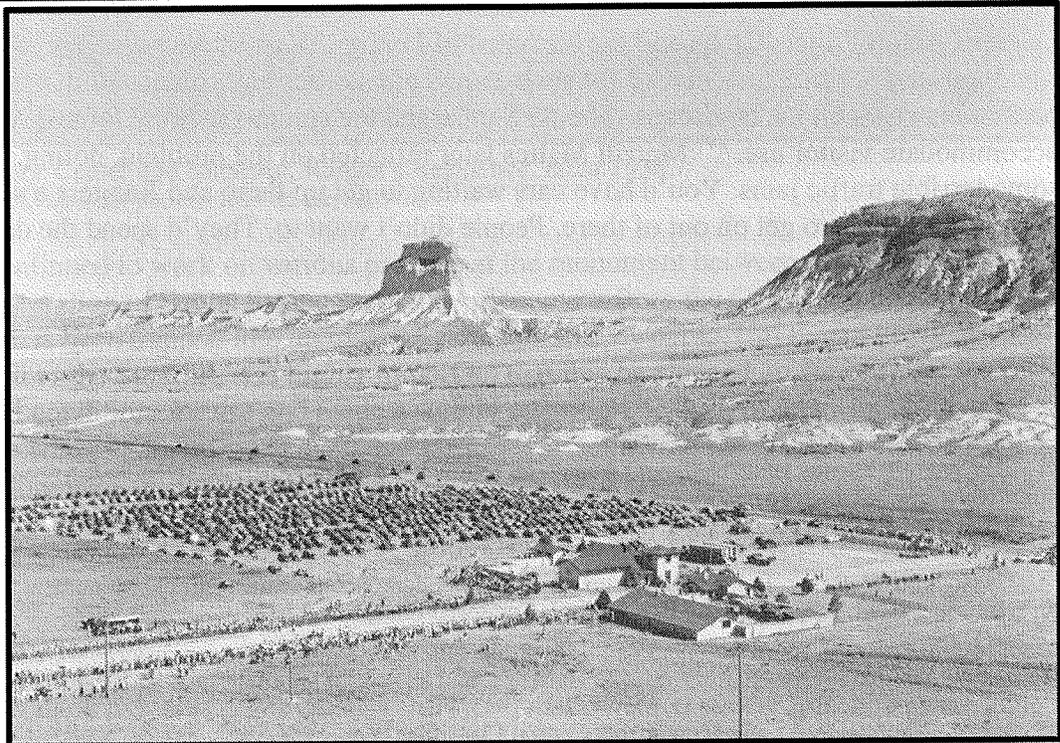
<sup>346</sup> Barber, "Scotts Bluff Summit Road, HAER No. NE-11," 46. Easter sunrise services were first held in 1939, but bad weather led to cancellations in 1940 and 1941, and no service was held in 1942 because of the war. A. Lynn Coffin, Acting Custodian, to Rose D. Meyer, 2/23/1943, File: "Publicity 1 of 2," Box 197, Scotts Bluff National Monument, National Parks and Monuments Central Classified Files, 1936-1952, RG 79, NARA-CPR.

<sup>347</sup> Cockrell, "Scotts Bluff National Monument, Nebraska: An Administrative History."

<sup>348</sup> Quoted in Cockrell, "Scotts Bluff National Monument, Nebraska: An Administrative History."



**Figure 7.14:**  
Soap Box  
Derby.  
Source: Robert  
Budlong to  
Superintendent,  
Rocky Mountain  
National Park,  
September 26,  
1947, Curatorial  
Files, Scotts  
Bluff National  
Monument.



Sometime in or before 1940, the Bureau of Reclamation replaced its existing power line poles with what Custodian Mattes called “a new set of bigger and more obtrusive poles.” He complained about the “unsightly” power line and hoped for its removal “to another point where it will not spoil the historic integrity of the Mitchell Pass-Oregon Trail route.”<sup>349</sup>

Heavy use of the monument prompted the NPS to step up its protection of the delicate landscape. In 1939, it decided to close the picnic area west of Mitchell Pass. Mattes explained that visitors had chopped down trees and left trash behind, and “further damage . . . would inevitably result in a dust-bowl condition.”<sup>350</sup> Local users of the park hoped the picnic grounds would be reopened, but the NPS fully removed the facilities in 1941.<sup>351</sup>

In 1949, the NPS expanded both the Ranger’s Residence and the Visitor Center. The residence received an additional bedroom, while the Jackson Memorial Wing was added to the museum.<sup>352</sup> The Jackson wing was built as exhibit space for William Henry Jackson’s artwork. In 1936, he had donated to the monument a folio of 50 reproductions of his Oregon Trail scenes.<sup>353</sup> He later gave the Oregon Trail Memorial Association a number of watercolors and paintings.<sup>354</sup> When he died in 1942 at the age of 99, Jackson left a collection of his artwork to his friend Howard R. Driggs. In turn, Driggs gave the collection to the Oregon Trail Museum at the monument, for which the museum created the Jackson Memorial Wing with funding from Julius F. Stone.<sup>355</sup> After World War II interrupted construction plans, an additional \$2,000 needed for construction “was speedily raised by popular subscription” by “the war residents of the area.”<sup>356</sup> The American Pioneer Trails Association dedicated the wing on August 8, 1949.<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>349</sup> Annual Narrative Report for Fiscal Year 1940, October 7, 1940, 3, File: “207-01 Annual Reports,” Box 196, Scotts Bluff National Monument, National Parks and Monuments Central Classified Files, 1936–1952, RG 79, NARA-CPR.

<sup>350</sup> News Item for Release Friday, September 15, 1939, File: “101 History—General (2 of 2),” Box 196, Scotts Bluff National Monument, National Parks and Monuments Central Classified Files, 1936–1952, RG 79, NARA-CPR.

<sup>351</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 46.

<sup>352</sup> O’Bright, “Trail Oasis,” 24; Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 51.

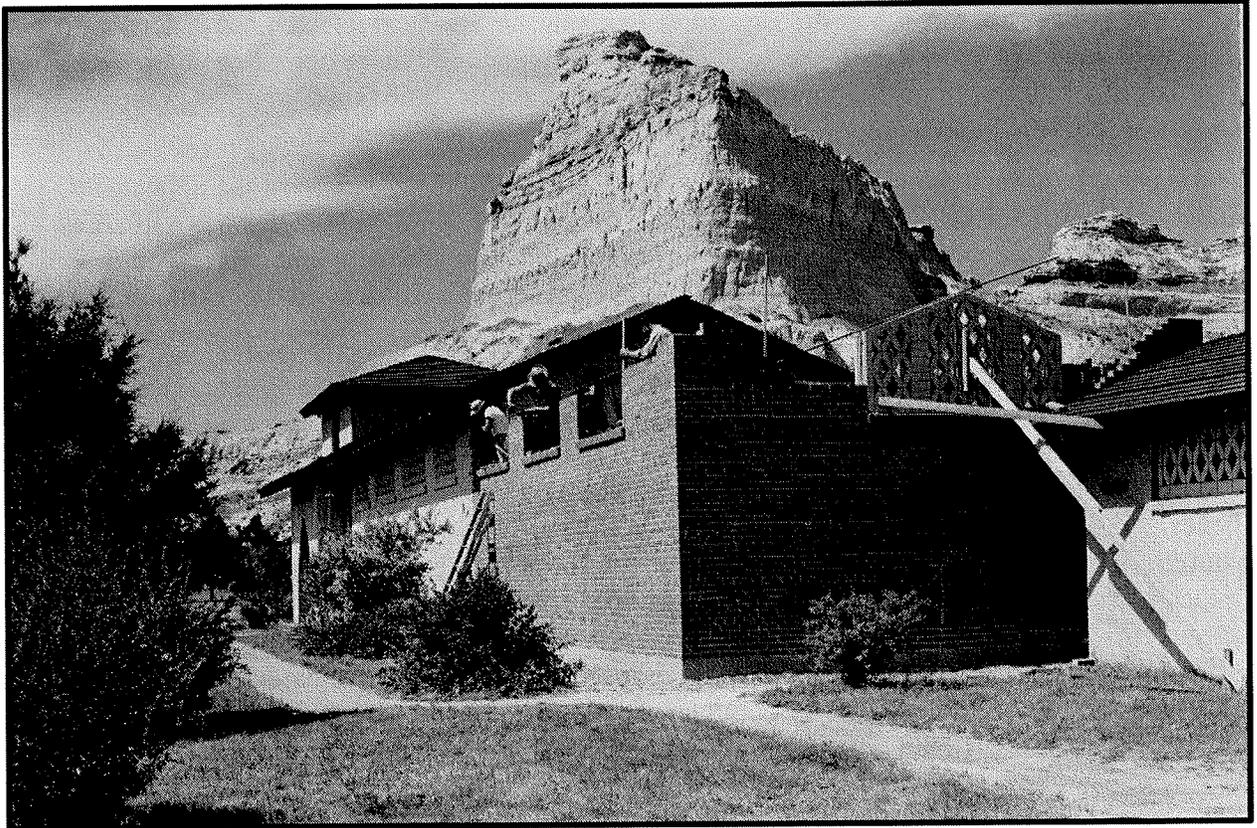
<sup>353</sup> Merrill J. Mattes, Second Annual Report of Museum Activities, July 10, 1938, 15, File: 833-05 Museums 4-1937 Thru 12-1944 1 of 2, Box 201, Scotts Bluff National Monument, National Parks and Monuments Central Classified Files, 1936–1952, RG 79, NARA-CPR.

<sup>354</sup> “Jackson Collection of Paintings Is Given to Oregon Trail Association,” clipping from unidentified newspaper, August 16, 1940, File: Jackson, William Henry, Newspaper Articles,” Curatorial Files, SBNM.

<sup>355</sup> Dean Knudsen, *An Eye for History: The Paintings of William Henry Jackson*, (Gering, NE: Oregon Trail Museum Association, n.d.), x; Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 41-42; Gerald Sherratt Library, “Howard R. Driggs Biography,” <http://www.li.suu.edu/page/special-digital-collections-howard-r-driggs-collection-biography>.

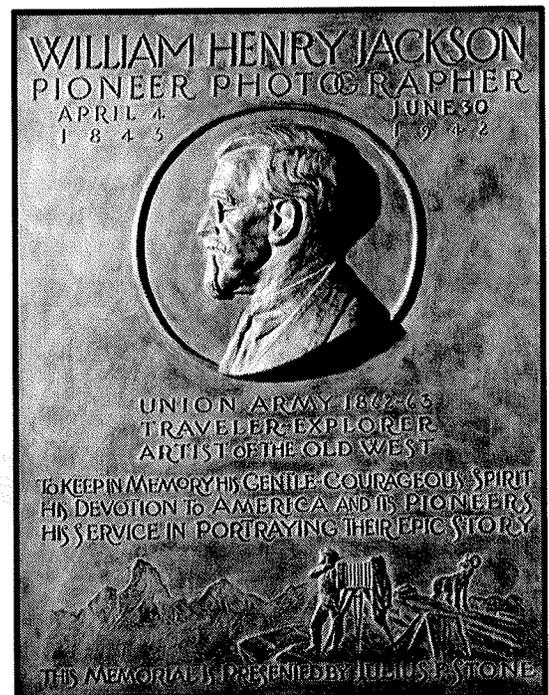
<sup>356</sup> Dedication Program, August 8, 1949, File: “101 History—General (1 of 2),” Box 196, Scotts Bluff National Monument, National Parks and Monuments Central Classified Files, 1936–1952, RG 79, NARA-CPR; “Dedication for Museum Section Honors Jackson,” *Scottsbluff Daily Star-Herald*, August 9, 1949, File: Jackson, William Henry, Newspaper Articles,” Curatorial Files, SBNM.

<sup>357</sup> Dedication Program, August 8, 1949, File: “101 History—General (1 of 2),” Box 196, Scotts Bluff National Monument, National Parks and Monuments Central Classified Files, 1936–1952, RG 79, NARA-CPR.



**Figure 7.15:** Jackson Memorial Wing, Construction, 1948.  
 Source: Administrative History Photographs, Scotts Bluff National Monument, sb3141.

**Figure 7.16:** William Henry Jackson Memorial Plaque.  
*Transcription:* William Henry Jackson, Pioneer Photographer, April 4, 1843 – June 30, 1942. Union Army 1862-63. Traveler-Explorer Artist of the Old West. To keep in memory his gentle courageous spirit, his devotion to America and its pioneers, his service in portraying their epic story, this memorial is presented by Julius F. Stone.  
 Source: William Henry Jackson Collection at Scotts Bluff National Monument, SCBL\_1500.



The NPS removed two facilities—a rifle range and the Gering Golf Course—that did not fit with the monument’s mission.<sup>358</sup> The rifle range had operated under permits with the NPS starting in 1925. At some point, it was moved from near the monument headquarters to an area south of Dome Rock.<sup>359</sup> The NPS decided to discontinue its use in 1948. According to Rocky Mountain National Park Superintendent David Canfield, who had jurisdiction over the monument at that time, “use of a portion of the Scotts Bluff National Monument as a firing range is not in the public interest, and this Service under its responsibilities cannot grant permission to any group or groups for the resumption of this non-conforming use of national monument land.” Canfield also noted that use of the range posed a hazard to visitors.<sup>360</sup>

The Gering Golf Course had been in use since 1927 or 1928, authorized by permits with the NPS.<sup>361</sup> In 1949, the NPS decided not to renew the course’s permit beyond the end of 1950. Scotts Bluff Superintendent Robert Budlong explained that interest in the course had faded, particularly as the nearby Scotts Bluff Country Club was rebuilding after a fire. He advised that the Gering course’s shelter house should be demolished.<sup>362</sup> The NPS removed the structure in 1951.<sup>363</sup>

Finally, the Mitchell Pass road, which traversed the monument, was developed as a gravel road in the late 1930s (using CCC labor and then WPA funds). In 1953, the state of Nebraska began improving the road under a permit with the NPS. The road was realigned and paved between 1954 and 1956. It has been known over time as State Highway 86, State Highway 92, and (currently) Old Oregon Trail, a county road.<sup>364</sup> Parts of the road overlie the historic Oregon Trail.<sup>365</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 53.

<sup>359</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 55-56.

<sup>360</sup> David H. Canfield, Superintendent, Rocky Mountain National Park, to Hans J. Holtorf, Jr., Nebraska National Guard, July 13, 1948, File: 901 Permits Military, Box 201, Scotts Bluff National Monument, National Parks and Monuments Central Classified Files, 1936–1952, RG 79, NARA-CPR.

<sup>361</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 54-55.

<sup>362</sup> Robert R. Budlong, Superintendent, to Superintendent, Rocky Mountain National Park, October 11, 1950, File: 901 Permits Scotts Bluff Country Club, Scotts Bluff National Monument, National Parks and Monuments Central Classified Files, 1936–1952, RG 79, NARA-CPR; Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 55.

<sup>363</sup> Superintendent to Director, Monthly Narrative Report for June 1951, July 6, 1951, 4, File: Superintendent’s Monthly Narratives (1950–1952) Folder 10, Box 2, Series 1, Administrative Subject Files 1933–1969, Scotts Bluff National Monument, RG 79, NARA-CPR.

<sup>364</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 39, 56.

<sup>365</sup> See, for example, Figure 1-2 of Mundus Bishop, “Oregon Trail Ruts Landscape Study and Environmental Assessment: Scotts Bluff National Monument Oregon Trail Ruts Landscape,” April 2011, 1-7.



**Figure 7.17:** Expanded Maintenance Shed, 1958.

Source: Administrative History Photographs, Scotts Bluff National Monument, sb2296.

## **MISSION 66, 1956-1966**

Following World War II, automobile tourism grew dramatically and previously remote parks became more easily accessible. Visitation rose beyond the parks' capacity to accommodate it, overtaxing aging "rustic" facilities and sometimes leading to environmental damage. The NPS struggled with low budgets, lack of manpower, and increasing criticism of its park management. To address these problems, NPS Director Conrad Wirth launched the MISSION 66 program, a ten-year initiative begun in 1956 and timed to end with the fiftieth anniversary of the NPS in 1966. Wirth obtained the endorsement of President Dwight Eisenhower and funding from Congress to support MISSION 66, which aimed to improve parks across the country by building modern visitor centers, upgrading and expanding park roads, and adding administrative facilities such as offices and employee housing. During the MISSION 66 program, the NPS spent more than \$1 billion in an effort to "streamline and standardize visitor services at federal parks nationwide."<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>366</sup> C. Madrid French, "What is Mission 66?," <http://www.mission66.com/mission.html>; Ethan Carr, *MISSION 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 3-10.

At Scotts Bluff, MISSION 66 activities occurred primarily in the late 1950s and included construction of a second residence for park staff (the MISSION 66 Residence), expansion of the Maintenance Shed by two stalls, construction of a public amphitheater (Campfire Circle) behind the Visitor Center, and trail improvement. An additional trail was added at the summit to a south overlook.<sup>367</sup> While many parks around the country gained modernist visitor centers and other structures, Scotts Bluff underwent a fairly modest construction program using a streamlined style compatible with the original CCC buildings. MISSION 66 projects at Scotts Bluff totaled \$121,100.<sup>368</sup>

The Campfire Circle, located on the north side of the Museum and Visitor Center, is an outdoor amphitheater encompassing rows of wood benches on concrete footings, a projection screen on an elevated concrete platform, a projection booth (added at a later date), and a brick fire circle. It is partially flanked by the exterior walls of the Museum and Comfort Station. A wood fence and a stucco-clad wall complete the perimeter of the amphitheater. The second residence is a detached structure that sits just west of the original Ranger's Residence (now Administrative Offices).

Following passage of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, Scotts Bluff was placed on the NRHP for its archeological and historical significance. Since then, structures from the New Deal and MISSION 66 eras of NPS development have become eligible for the inclusion on the Register. The nomination was updated accordingly in 2012 (see Appendix).

## Post-MISSION 66 Construction

The monument has not changed significantly since the MISSION 66 campaign. In the 1970s, the interior of the Visitor's Center was substantially altered with drop ceilings, florescent and track-mounted light fixtures, carpet and drywall installation, and other improvements; however, it is believed that original materials (with the exception of fixtures) are intact. Four new bays were added to the Maintenance Shed in 1981. Window and door alterations were made to the Maintenance Shed, Visitor Center, and Ranger's Residence. However, these alterations are minimal and do not detract from the historic character of these buildings.<sup>369</sup>

In 1961, the NPS began negotiations with the Scotts Bluff Country Club to purchase its land adjacent to the monument. It did not complete the transaction until 1976, when the park service bought 86 acres from the club for \$690,000. The club's structures were removed soon thereafter. Monument staff began restoring the site to prairie in 1993.<sup>370</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 62.

<sup>368</sup> Cockrell, "Scotts Bluff National Monument, Nebraska: An Administrative History," [http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/scbl/adhi/adhi3.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/scbl/adhi/adhi3.htm).

<sup>369</sup> HRA researchers collected information for this section through conversations with Scotts Bluff staff during a field visit in May 2011.

<sup>370</sup> "The Scotts Bluff Country Club Reclamation Project: A Brief History," n.d., File: Country Club History, Manuscript File, Curatorial Files, SBNM.



**Figure 7.18:** Scotts Bluff National Monument Headquarters, Current Conditions.  
 Source: Historical Research Associates, Inc.

Other changes at the monument included modification to the parking area at the base of Scotts Bluff, which in 1988 was expanded to the east to accommodate buses and recreation vehicles.<sup>371</sup> An entrance booth, constructed by the Pine Ridge Job Corps in Chadron, Nebraska, was added in 1990.

The monument's boundaries have changed several more times since 1940. On June 30, 1961, Congress authorized the Secretary of the Interior to adjust the boundaries "in order to preserve the scenic and historic integrity of Scotts Bluff and adjacent features . . ." The act allowed removal of certain private lands and the addition of others, with a net loss of around 350 acres.<sup>372</sup> The Secretary approved the resulting boundary adjustment on February 2, 1962. According to monument Superintendent Harold Jones, "The new boundary excludes some agricultural land which was within the original proclaimed boundary and includes a few small tracts along the east boundary where development would be an intrusion on the natural scene." He reported a total of 3,084 acres within the monument, including private lands.<sup>373</sup> As noted above, the NPS subsequently purchased a portion of the Scotts Bluff Country Club in the 1970s. Today, the monument includes approximately 3,000 acres.<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>371</sup> Steve Osborne, comp., "Scotts Bluff National Monument Timeline," National Park Service internal document, 2009, available at SBNM.

<sup>372</sup> Act of June 30, 1961, 75 Stat. 148.

<sup>373</sup> Harold R. Jones, Superintendent, to Director, Superintendent's Monthly Narrative Report for March 1962, April 6, 1962, 2, File: Superintendent's Monthly Narratives (1962-1964) Folder 15, Box 2, Series 1, Administrative Subject Files 1933-1969, Scotts Bluff National Monument, RG 79, NARA-CPR.

<sup>374</sup> National Parks Conservation Association, *State of the Parks: Scotts Bluff National Monument*, (N.p.: National Parks Conservation Association, 2009), 3.

## Conclusion

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In the mid-nineteenth century, Scotts Bluff served as a marker of the long overland journey on at least three levels. Geographically, it marked Scotts Spring and Mitchell Pass, features important to travelers for the water and easy passage they afforded. Visually, it marked the transition from prairie to mountains, giving emigrants a sense of progress on their journeys and some relief from the more monotonous landscape they had previously traversed. Symbolically, it helped them associate their difficult journeys with divine purpose.

In the early twentieth century, Scotts Bluff became a symbol of the pioneer past in which local residents took pride. They sought to protect the bluff for its association with the overland journey, but they also saw recreational and economic potential in creating a park there. Their promotional efforts succeeded in persuading President Woodrow Wilson to set Scotts Bluff aside as a national monument for its historical and geological significance. Subsequent development of the park emphasized interpretation of the Oregon Trail, along with geology, paleontology, and the artistic legacy of William Henry Jackson.

The present-day view from the summit offers a multilayered visual experience that resonates with the monument's interpretive mission. Visitors can survey the variety of topographies that merge at Scotts Bluff: erosional remnants of the ancient high plains, badlands, the North Platte River and its ribbon of green growth, and short- and mixed-grass prairie. They can also trace the route of the Great Platte River Road and imagine the challenges of overland emigration. Finally, visitors can see how the region has been transformed by irrigation, transportation networks, agriculture, and industry, which are all very visible from the summit. It is an excellent vantage point for thinking about both geology and human history.

## Recommendations

Studies conducted for Scotts Bluff National Monument in the last 15 years cover a wide range of topics and leave few gaps for further research. Notable among these are a cultural affiliation study (1998), the Historic American Engineering Record report for the Summit Road (2000), a historic structure report for the Visitor Center (2001), a geologic resources study (2009), and a study of Oregon Trail ruts (2011). The monument's primary need is an updated administrative history. In addition, HRA found a few small topics that may be worth future investigation.

### *Administrative History Update*

The most recent history, written by Ron Cockrell, was completed in 1983. It updated Earl Harris's 1962 history. A comprehensive administrative history, from the monument's founding to the present, would be a useful tool for park service staff and could serve as a base for any future specialized studies.

### *MISSION 66 Construction*

The MISSION 66 building campaign undertaken at Scotts Bluff was relatively small and did not result in the modernist architecture that characterized MISSION 66. HRA found few records related to MISSION 66 projects, although more may be available in the Scotts Bluff administrative records. It could be useful to compile information related to MISSION 66 at Scotts Bluff and situate it in the larger history of the program. The Scotts Bluff experience may

represent an interesting counterpoint to the national program, or perhaps it reflects an underappreciated pattern in the larger story.

### ***Undevelopment at Scotts Bluff***

Like a number of other NPS sites, Scotts Bluff removed facilities that did not conform to its mission. HRA found this information scattered through various records and reports, and it was difficult to pinpoint the locations and extent of some removed structures. A compilation of all of the removals, along with the subsequent treatment of the sites, could be useful for future studies, particularly for an administrative history.

### ***National Register Eligibility of Irrigation Canals***

HRA determined that the irrigation canals that run through the monument do not contribute to the Scotts Bluff historic district. They may, however, be eligible for National Register listing individually. Further research is necessary to make these determinations. A more detailed history of the canals and their rights of way may also be useful if trespass issues arise.<sup>375</sup>

### ***American Indians' Understandings of Scotts Bluff***

The 1998 cultural affiliation study for Scotts Bluff and Agate Fossil Beds identified the American Indian groups that occupied or used the region encompassing the two monuments. The study did not examine the cultural significance of Scotts Bluff to any of the tribes, noting,

Cultural connections are not as easily identified or discussed as historical or legal connections. In most instances the individuals who had once occupied this area have died and their cultural and traditional heirs are several generations removed. Nevertheless, it is conceivable that many descendants of these early people have some family legends or group-specific stories that would provide them with a cultural linkage to the research domain.<sup>376</sup>

HRA found one newspaper report from the 1940s that recorded a Pine Ridge man's recollection of camping near Scotts Bluff. It is possible that other documentary records of American Indians' encounters with Scotts Bluff exist, and it is also possible that tribes formerly in the region have maintained oral traditions about it or the surrounding area. If such information is available, it would help enrich the history of Scotts Bluff as a landmark and symbol.

### ***Local Understandings of Scotts Bluff***

The local communities of Scottsbluff and Gering were instrumental in getting Scotts Bluff National Monument established. Alicia Barber has examined this history and some of its symbolic dimensions.<sup>377</sup> A deeper inquiry into the local understandings of Scotts Bluff as landscape feature and symbol would help illuminate the relationship between the monument and the community. How has the local community related to Scotts Bluff as recreational, historical, and economic space? How has Scotts Bluff functioned as an icon defining locals' sense of place and identity? These questions could also reveal similarities or differences among the various ethnic groups in the area.

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<sup>375</sup> Resource Management Specialist Robert Manasek discussed a possible trespass by the Central Canal during HRA's 2011 field visit.

<sup>376</sup> David T. Hughes, "Cultural Affiliations of Native Americans to the Region Encompassing Scotts Bluff National Monument and Agate Fossil Beds National Monument in Northwestern Nebraska," October 5, 1988, 61.

<sup>377</sup> Barber, "Local Places, National Spaces," 35-64.

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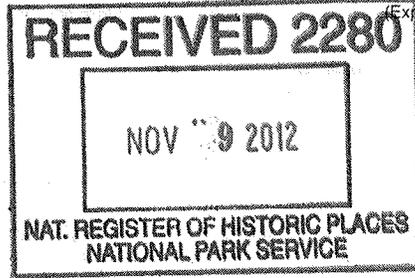
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Young, Brigham, 30, 33, 34  
Young, Robert, 54, 57  
Zig Zag Trail, 8, 64-66

**Appendix**  
**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,**  
**Scotts Bluff National Monument, Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska**



66000117



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Scotts Bluff National Monument (nomination update)  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 190276 Old Oregon Trail (three miles west of Gering on Old Oregon Trail)  not for publication  
 X  
city or town Gering vicinity \_\_\_\_\_  
state Nebraska code 31 county Scotts Bluff code 157 zip code 69341

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this \_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.  
In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national \_\_\_ statewide \_\_\_ local

Robert L. Miller, Chief, National Agency, FPO November 7, 2012  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
National Park Service

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): Additional Documentation Approved

Joe Gibson D. Beall 12-26-12  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
 (Check as many boxes as apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

**Category of Property**  
 (Check only one box.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
4	2	buildings
47	3	sites
4	15	structures
2	0	objects
57	20	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

Scotts Bluff National Monument (4 prehistoric "structures" [read: sites] were included in the original 1978 listing)

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

Recreation and Culture: Museum

Recreation and Culture: Outdoor Recreation

Recreation and Culture: Monument/Marker

Landscape: Park

Landscape: Natural Feature

**Current Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

Recreation and Culture: Museum

Recreation and Culture: Outdoor Recreation

Recreation and Culture: Monument/Marker

Landscape: Park

Landscape: Natural Feature

Landscape: Conservation Area

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revivals:

Mission / Spanish Colonial Revival

**Materials**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Adobe (brick)  
Stucco

roof: Wood (shingle)

other: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Narrative Description**

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**Summary Paragraph**

This document updates the existing 1978 National Register listing for Scotts Bluff National Monument (the nomination was submitted in 1976 and the monument was listed by the Keeper in 1978). The existing nomination/listing includes only archeological sites located within the monument that were known at the time of the nomination. This nomination expands the significance of the monument to include both additional archeological sites and the built environment.

The monument comprises approximately 3,000 acres in the vicinity of Gering, Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska. Located in the Scottsbluff South topographic quadrangle, the monument includes land located in all or portions of Township 21 North, Range 55 West, Sections 3, 4, 5, 9 and 10, and Township 22 North, Range 55 West, Sections 27, 28, 29, 32, 33, and 34. The monument is located south of and adjacent to the North Platte River, approximately four miles southwest of Scottsbluff, Nebraska, and three miles west of Gering, Nebraska.

The monument encompasses culturally significant geological features, buildings, structures, objects, and archeological sites. Also included within the boundaries of the monument are inholdings or rights-of-way for the Gering-Ft. Laramie Irrigation District, the Gering Irrigation District (synonymous with the Mitchell Irrigation District, though this name applies only outside monument boundaries), the Central Irrigation District, the Union Pacific Railroad, the Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), the Roosevelt Public Power District (RPPD), and the Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD). These resources are not affiliated with the monument.

A complete inventory and description of each building and structure extant within the monument follows. Table 1 lists the contributing and noncontributing buildings, structures, objects, and sites. Table 2 provides a detailed list of contributing and noncontributing archeological sites.

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**Table 1: Inventory of Contributing and Noncontributing Resources**

Date(s)	Resource Name	Contributing/Noncontributing
<b>Geologic Features</b>		
Prehistoric	Scotts Bluff (including Eagle Rock and Saddle Rock)	Contributing Site
Prehistoric	South Bluff (including Sentinel Rock, Crown Rock and Dome Rock)	Contributing Site
Prehistoric	The Badlands	Contributing Site
Prehistoric, 1936	Scotts Spring	Contributing Site
<b>Buildings and Structures</b>		
1990	Entrance Booth	Noncontributing Building
1935, 1938, 1948	Museum and Visitor Center	Contributing Building
1937	Comfort Station	Contributing Building
1958	Campfire Circle	Contributing Structure
1938, 1949	Ranger's Residence (now Offices)	Contributing Building
1958	Mission 66 Residence	Contributing Building
1936, 1958, 1981	Maintenance Shed	Noncontributing Building
ca. 1990	Vehicle Shed	Noncontributing Structure
2007	Picnic Shelters	Noncontributing Structures (3)
1933-1939	Summit Road	Contributing Structure
ca. 1936	Saddle Rock Trail	Contributing Structure
ca. 1936	Summit Trail and Observation Points	Contributing Structure
1933	Metal Survey Post	Contributing Object
1995	Observation Point	Noncontributing Structure
ca. 1968	Bike Trail	Noncontributing Structure
ca. 2010	Boundary Fences	Noncontributing Structure
<b>Signs and Memorials</b>		
1912	Granite Marker	Contributing Object
<b>Archeological Sites and Ruins (also see Table 2)</b>		
Prehistoric	Archeological Sites (40)	Contributing Sites (40)
Multi-Component	Prehistoric and Historic Archeological Sites (2)	Contributing Sites (2)
Historic	Archeological Sites (6), including,	Noncontributing Sites (3)
1800-1899	Oregon Trail	Contributing Site
ca. 1930	Zig Zag Trail	Contributing Site
1930	Hiram Scott Memorial Arch	Contributing Site
<b>Inholdings and Rights of Way</b>		
ca. 1900	Gering-Ft. Laramie Irrigation District Canal	Noncontributing Structure
ca. 1900	Gering Irrigation District Canal	Noncontributing Structure
ca. 1942	Central Irrigation District Canal	Noncontributing Structure
ca. 1910	Union Pacific Railroad	Noncontributing Structure
	Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) Transmission Line	Noncontributing Structure
	Roosevelt Public Power District (RPPD) Transmission Line	Noncontributing Structure
after 1964	Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD) Radio Tower	Noncontributing Structure
ca. 1932	Old Oregon Trail (former State Highway 92)	Noncontributing Structure

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**Table 2. Archeological Sites within the Boundaries of Scotts Bluff National Monument.**

State ID	ASMIS ID	Site Type(s)	Site Name	Eligibility
25SF00011	SCBL00005.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00032	SCBL00006.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00033	SCBL00007.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00034	SCBL00008.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00035	SCBL00009.000	Artifact Scatter		Contributing
25SF00036	SCBL00010.000	Habitation		Contributing
25SF00037	SCBL00011.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00038	SCBL00012.000	Artifact Scatter		Contributing
25SF00039	SCBL00013.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00040	SCBL00014.000	Artifact Scatter		Contributing
25SF00044	SCBL00018.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00046	SCBL00020.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00047	SCBL00021.000	Rock Feature		Contributing
25SF00048	SCBL00022.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00049	SCBL00023.000	Historic Dump		Noncontributing
25SF00050	SCBL00024.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00051	SCBL00025.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00054	SCBL00027.000	Rock Feature		Contributing
25SF00055	SCBL00028.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00056	SCBL00029.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00057	SCBL00030.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00063	SCBL00035.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00065	SCBL00037.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00067	SCBL00039.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00068	SCBL00040.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00069	SCBL00041.000	Artifact Scatter		Contributing
25SF00070	SCBL00042.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00071	SCBL00043.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00072	SCBL00044.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00073	SCBL00045.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00074	SCBL00046.000	Artifact Scatter		Contributing
25SF00076	SCBL00048.000	Habitation		Contributing
25SF00077	SCBL00049.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00078	SCBL00050.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00079	SCBL00051.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00081	SCBL00053.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00082	SCBL00054.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00083	SCBL00055.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00084	SCBL00056.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
25SF00149	SCBL00059.000	Structure	Ditchrider's Dugout	Noncontributing
25SF00150	SCBL00060.000	Artifact Scatter	Corsini	Contributing
25SF00151	SCBL00062.000	Artifact Scatter Hearth		Contributing
25SF00152	SCBL00061.000	Artifact Scatter Hearth	Clawson Site	Contributing
25SF00153	SCBL00063.000	Midden	Historic Dump 2008-1	Noncontributing
Hiram Scott Mem.	SCBL00058.000	Structure	Hiram Scott Memorial Arch	Contributing
SCBL-91-38	SCBL00003.000	Lithic Scatter		Contributing
	SCBL00065.000	Structure	Zig Zag Trail	Contributing
	SCBL00064.000	Structure	The Oregon Trail (section)	Contributing

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## Narrative Description

Resources in the monument can be divided into the following four categories: geological features, buildings and structures, signs and memorials, and archeological sites and ruins. Other resources located within the boundaries but not affiliated with the monument include non-park inholdings and rights-of-way.

## Geological Features

The topography of western Nebraska is primarily flat prairie, making the layers of sandstone, siltstone, volcanic ash and limestone that form the bluffs and badlands in the monument not only visually striking but also scientifically interesting. Additionally, while the broad valley created by the North Platte River facilitated western migration, the badlands and bluff formations presented barriers to travel that forced immigrants out of the river valley. The natural, eroded depression between Sentinel Rock (on South Bluff) and Eagle Rock (on Scotts Bluff) afforded Native and Euroamerican travelers a path west, eventually named Mitchell Pass. Scientific interest in the site has been apparent since the 1890s, when the U.S. Geologic Survey made the first formal investigation of the area, and numerous geological publications have been completed since then.<sup>1</sup>

The monument includes several geological features that dominate the surrounding landscape. Though little is known about the value of these resources to prehistoric peoples and Native American tribes, archeological finds at the monument indicate an extensive period of habitation. Euroamerican settlers valued these geologic features as navigational aids, and overland journals recorded the profound psychological impact Scotts Bluff had on early pioneers.<sup>2</sup> More than a physical landmark, these promontories were recognized as an "identifiable objective" that afforded weary travelers a renewal of strength in the face of survived "floods, dust storms, quagmires, marauding Indians, cholera, and the loss of loved ones in trailside graves."<sup>3</sup> These natural landmarks are strongly associated with the significant prehistoric and historic events that ultimately led to the establishment of the monument, and are contributing sites to the Scotts Bluff National Monument Historic District.

### Scotts Bluff

Scotts Bluff is a topographic feature rising 4,659 feet above sea level and 800 feet above the North Platte River. According to the National Park Service (NPS), "the geology of Scotts Bluff is significant from a natural resource standpoint because it affords a view of 740 feet of continuous geologic strata that spans a time period extending from 33 to 22 million years before present. The north face of Scotts Bluff has exposed the most geological history of any location in the state of Nebraska."<sup>4</sup> Scotts Bluff includes Eagle Rock (on the south side of the bluff) and Saddle Rock (on the east side of the bluff).

### South Bluff

South Bluff is separated from Scotts Bluff by the naturally eroded depression known today as Mitchell Pass. Like Scotts Bluff, South Bluff rises above the flat prairie in geologic strata of sandstone, siltstone, volcanic ash and limestone. South Bluff features Sentinel Rock (on the north end of the bluff, opposite Eagle Rock at Mitchell Pass), Crown Rock, and Dome Rock.

### The Badlands

Located between the north face of Scotts Bluff and the North Platte River, the badlands include steep-sided gullies known as arroyos, which support little or no vegetation. The badlands feature the oldest exposed rocks (33 million years before present), comprising siltstones and mudstones with interbedded sandstones. Wide varieties of sedimentary structures, fossils, and volcanoclastic sediments are present or have been found in the badlands.

<sup>1</sup> National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, "Scotts Bluff National Monument, Geologic Features," <http://www.nps.gov/scbl/naturescience/geology.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Ron Cockrell, "Scotts Bluff National Monument, Nebraska: An Administrative History, 1960-1983," 1983, [http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/scbl/adhi/adhi1.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/scbl/adhi/adhi1.htm).

<sup>3</sup> *Master Plan, Scotts Bluff National Monument, Nebraska* (1976), as quoted in Ron Cockrell, "Scotts Bluff National Monument, Nebraska: An Administrative History, 1960-1983," 1983, [http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/scbl/adhi/adhi1.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/scbl/adhi/adhi1.htm).

<sup>4</sup> "Scotts Bluff National Monument, Geologic Features," <http://www.nps.gov/scbl/naturescience/geology.htm>.

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### **Scotts Spring**

Scotts Spring is a natural spring and underground cistern that is located at the base of Saddle Rock. Caven P. Clark conducted an archeological survey at the monument in the early 1990s, noting that Scotts Spring "appeared to be a complex stratified site" with a long occupational history, "which may span the Late Archaic to Protohistoric periods."<sup>5</sup> More recently, ca. 1920 and prior to the establishment of the Scotts Bluff National Monument, a homestead was located at the spring site. In 1936, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) undertook restoration of the spring in conjunction with other work being completed at the monument. Today, Scotts Spring is a small trickle of water encased in a steel culvert that runs beneath the Saddle Rock Trail.

### **Buildings and Structures**

The monument includes buildings and structures from at least three building campaigns. The first dates from the initial grading of the Summit Road and construction of the Museum, ca. 1934. The second, ca. 1938, included an addition to the Museum, as well as construction of the comfort station, Ranger's Residence (now offices), and Maintenance Shed. The third building campaign came as part of the Mission 66 initiative, a nationwide developmental program conducted by the NPS from 1955 to 1966. Buildings from this time period include the Mission 66 residence and the Campfire Circle, ca. 1958.

In addition to new construction, alterations were made to the Museum, through the addition of the Jackson Memorial Wing, and the original Ranger's Residence, ca. 1948. Other buildings and structures, such as the picnic shelters, parking areas, and vehicle sheds, were added over time.

In general, resources are described as one would encounter them upon entering the monument.

### **Entrance Booth**

The entrance booth is located in the center of the two-lane road that accesses both the Museum complex and Summit Road, off Old Oregon Trail. The building is rectangular in plan, sits on a poured concrete slab foundation, and is one story with a gable roof. The roof features exposed rafter tails and is clad in wood shingles. The building is clad in stucco with T1-11 siding in the gable ends. One-by-one vinyl slider windows are located on both the east and west elevations, and a single-light vinyl picture window is located on the south elevation. The entrance door is located on the north elevation and is a modern, one-light steel door.

The entrance booth was constructed in 1990 by the Pine Ridge Job Corps in Chadron, Nebraska. The building was assembled off-site and moved to its current location. The entrance booth, while compatible with the historic district, was built outside the period of significance and is a noncontributing building within the historic district.

### **Museum and Visitor Center**

The Museum and Visitor Center is a roughly L-shaped building that faces southeast. The building is one story on a basement, with a two-story tower wing on the southwest corner. The tower features a hip roof with wide, projecting eaves; the rest of the massing is covered by a shed-on-gable roof. The roof features projecting rafter tails and wood shingles throughout. The building is clad in a combination of exposed, structural adobe bricks and stucco; both the bricks and stucco are painted.

The south elevation features the main entrance to the building: a projecting, enclosed porch defined by a pointed arch. To the east of the entryway are seven windows covered in brick latticework with brick subsills. A cellar-style door, approximately centered on the south elevation, accesses a concrete well at the basement level. To the west of the entryway is the tower, which features a three-light metal-sash picture window on the ground floor with a wood header and unpainted, red-brick subsill. The second floor of the tower on the south elevation features a centered pair of original, four-over-four wood-sash windows, also with an unpainted red-brick subsill. The upper-story window header ties into the plate at the roofline.

The upper-floor windows of the tower on the south elevation are mimicked on the west elevation. At the ground floor, a single metal-sash picture window features an unpainted brick subsill and a wood header. Historic photos and documentation reveal that this window was altered to a door to facilitate fee collection in the 1940s, and was later reconverted to a window. North of the tower is a projecting entry with a modern, centered, metal single-light door. On the north elevation of the projecting entry is a metal-sash window with an unpainted brick subsill and wood header. The

<sup>5</sup> Caven P. Clark, "Archeological Survey of Scotts Bluff National Monument, Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska," series ed. F.A. Calabrese, Lincoln, Nebraska: Midwest Archeological Center, 1994, 20.

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remainder of the west elevation, referred to as the west wing or the Paleontology wing, is defined by four windows covered in brick latticework with brick subsills that mimic those on the south elevation. These windows are mirrored on the east elevation of the west wing. Two cellar doors on the west elevation access concrete wells at the basement level.

The north elevation opens onto and partially encloses the amphitheater. The west wing projection features a single pentagonal window in the gable end, covered in brick latticework and with a brick subsill like others found on the south, east, and west elevations. The west wing acts as the western enclosure for the amphitheater. The central massing (Custodian's Office) on the north elevation is partially below ground level, with a double-door entrance accessed via a recessed concrete stair on the west end. Two asymmetrical banks of modern, metal-sash windows are located east of the entry door. The central massing recesses to the Jackson wing, which features three banks of windows covered in brick latticework with brick subsills. A single, metal entry door is located on the east end of the north elevation.

The remainder of the east elevation not previously described above is the gable end of the Jackson wing, which features a pentagonal window in the gable end covered in brick latticework with a brick subsill; this window is exactly like the window found on the north elevation of the west wing. The west elevation is partially obscured from sight by the Comfort Station building, which is not attached to the main building; however, the Comfort Station is connected to the Jackson wing by the Amphitheater wall.

The building houses the Visitor Center and Museum. Inside the main entrance, exposed adobe bricks and the dark wood ceiling are characteristic of the original Museum space. A desk provides access to monument staff and separates the public from the private office located behind the desk (on the ground floor of the tower). Additional private office space is located up a narrow staircase on the second level of the tower.

The Paleontology wing, which houses interpretive displays and a screening room (with projection booth and screen), is located on the north side of the first floor. The room is separated from the main entrance area by a short corridor, which has stairs to the basement level. The Paleontology room was modified in 1979 to include a drop ceiling, smooth walls, no windows, and carpet; however, the original timber-truss ceiling is still intact above the drop ceiling.

To the east of the entrance area is the gift shop, which opens into the Jackson wing. Both rooms were also modified in 1979 and feature drop ceilings, smooth walls, no windows, and carpet. The original materials are present above the drop ceiling and beneath the carpet.

The Museum and Visitor Center building was constructed in three stages. The central massing, which is built of structural adobe bricks, was completed in 1935. As initially constructed, the building included the main entrance and four bays to the east. The tower and Paleontology wing, begun in 1937 and completed by June 1938, are also built of structural adobe brick. Finally, the Jackson wing, dedicated on August 15, 1943, and completed in 1948, is constructed of brick on a concrete foundation. The Jackson wing expanded the original central massing by an extra three bays to the east side of the building.

Non-public spaces include the Custodian's offices located on the north elevation. Built concurrently with the Paleontology wing in 1938, the offices are accessed from the corridor between the entrance and Paleontology wing. The offices are partially subterranean and lead down to the basement level. The basement level houses the library, additional office space, and the vault.

Modifications to the building (aside from the major additions described above) have occurred over time. As originally constructed, the tower featured paired eight-light wood-sash casement windows at the ground level, one on the west elevation and a pair on the south elevation. In 1941, the west elevation window was altered to a door to facilitate fee collection. Later alterations restored the west elevation entry to a window, but modern metal-sash single-light picture windows replaced the historic wood casements on both the west and south elevations of the tower (on the ground floor) at an unknown date. These modern windows are also present on the north elevation Custodian offices. The original main entry door, historically constructed of vertical wood boards and wrought-iron hardware, was also replaced at an unknown date with a modern steel and glass-light door. All exterior entrances presently have modern doors.

Interior alterations have also occurred. Photos from June 1936 depict the original central massing interior as exposed adobe brick (possibly painted) with nine-light wood windows, exposed wood rafters in the ceiling, and flooring of either square laminate or stone. The Paleontology wing, as pictured in September 1940, was built with many of the same features, although the interior brick was not exposed and may have been stucco-covered as originally constructed. The Jackson wing featured exposed brick on the interior as initially constructed. By August 1951, the windows of the

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Paleontology wing had been covered (possibly with temporary plywood). In 1979, the interior of the entire Museum and Visitor Center was remodeled with drop ceilings and carpet, and all of the exposed interior brick (with the exception of the main entrance area) was covered. Most of the original doors and framing are still intact on the interior.

The William Henry Jackson Collection, archived in the Museum and Visitor Center, bears historical significance in its own right. Scotts Bluff is home to the world's largest collection of original William Henry Jackson sketches, paintings, and photographs. A large portion of the art work portrays life on the Oregon Trail and the difficulties of pioneers traveling to Oregon. A few of the paintings date from the 1860s, but most were created by Jackson in the 1930s, toward the end of his life. Much of the collection is available online in digital format via a searchable database.<sup>6</sup>

The Museum and Visitor Center was built within the period of significance for the monument and is a contributing building to the historic district. The building retains integrity of materials, design, workmanship, setting, location, feeling and association.

**Comfort Station**

The Comfort Station is a rectangular building that sits on a concrete foundation and features a side-gable roof with exposed rafter tails. Like other buildings in the Monument, the roof is clad in wood shingles. The building is clad in stucco over structural adobe bricks. The gable ends (east and west elevations) feature pentagonal windows covered in brick latticework with brick subsills. The north and south elevations each feature two banks of symmetrically placed windows; the south elevation features the typical brick latticework and brick subsills, while the north elevation is devoid of latticework. Both the east and west elevations feature a single entry door. The building is divided on the interior, with the women's restroom on the west side and the men's on the east side.

Built in July 1937, the Comfort Station has undergone only minor alterations. The exposed adobe brick was covered with stucco by July 1950. No alterations other than maintenance are known to have occurred to the building. The Comfort Station was built within the period of significance and is a contributing building to the monument. The building retains integrity of materials, design, workmanship, setting, location, feeling and association.

**The Campfire Circle (Amphitheater and Projection Booth)**

The Campfire Circle is an amphitheater featuring rows of wood benches on concrete footings, a projection screen on an elevated concrete platform/stage, a projection booth, and a brick fire circle. The Campfire Circle is located north of and adjacent to the Museum and Visitor Center. The north and west walls of the Museum building partially enclose the Campfire Circle area, as does the north wall of the Comfort Station. The Campfire Circle is partially enclosed on the west, north and east sides with a wood fence, as well as a stucco-clad concrete masonry unit (CMU) fence topped with sloped red bricks on the east and south sides.

The projection booth is a rectangular, single-story building on a concrete foundation. The booth features stucco-clad walls, a gable roof clad in wood shingles, and an entry door on the northeast elevation. The northwest elevation of the booth features a window-style opening for media projection.

The Campfire Circle was constructed in August 1958. As built, the Campfire Circle included both the wood and stucco-clad CMU fences, the brick fire circle, the projection screen and stage, and the same style of wood benches on concrete footings found today. The projection booth was added at an unknown time and is compatible with the historic district. No alterations or modifications other than maintenance are known to have occurred to the Campfire Circle. The Campfire Circle is a contributing structure to the historic district. The structure retains integrity of materials, design, workmanship, setting, location, feeling and association.

**Ranger's Residence (now Offices)**

The Ranger's Residence (now administrative offices) is a single-story building and is roughly cross-shaped in plan. The building sits on a concrete foundation and features a cross-gable roof with wood shingles and exposed rafter tails. The building was constructed in two parts: the original massing (completed in 1937) was constructed of structural adobe bricks clad in stucco, while the west addition (completed in 1949) was constructed of CMU clad in stucco. The east elevation features a central, exterior chimney, also clad in stucco and topped with red bricks. A second, interior chimney is located at the ridge of the cross gable on the northeast elevation.

<sup>6</sup> William Henry Jackson Collection at Scotts Bluff National Monument, online at [www.whjcollection.com](http://www.whjcollection.com).

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The main (south) elevation features a partially enclosed, partially covered patio area and the main entrance door to the east. The center of the south elevation extends beyond the central massing; this is mimicked on the north elevation to create the cross-shaped plan previously mentioned. Windows throughout the building feature wood headers and red brick subsills; most windows have been replaced with modern metal sash in the same profile. There are a few exceptions to this, specifically on the west and north elevation, where multi-light wood-sash windows are intact beneath exterior storm windows. All doors appear to be original.

The interior of the space, although converted to offices, has been largely unaltered. Original doors, built-ins, and room divisions are still intact. The historic kitchen area is devoid of typical kitchen items (sink, stove, refrigerator, etc.), but the space is primarily intact.

The Ranger's Residence was built in 1937 as a two-bedroom, one-bath house. In 1949, a third bedroom and laundry room were added on the northwest corner. The building is largely intact with the exception of some new windows; however, these windows conform to the original window openings and do not detract from the historic appearance of the building. The Ranger's Residence was built during the period of significance and is a contributing building to the historic district. The building retains integrity of materials, design, workmanship, setting, location, feeling and association.

### **Mission 66 Residence**

The Mission 66 Residence, occasionally referred to as Residence No. 6 in historic documents, is a single-story building, rectangular in plan, with a side-gable roof with wood shingles. The building features a poured-concrete foundation and is constructed of CMU clad in stucco. The main (south) elevation features a low-profile projection from the central massing with a central entry door (accessed via a concrete stoop) and large "Chicago-style" picture window (fixed central windows flanked by operable one-over-one windows). All other windows on the building are one-over-one light, including those flanking the central projection on the south elevation (two windows to the east and one to the west). The west elevation features a single central window. The east elevation features two windows.

The north elevation features a single-car garage and secondary entrance on the west side. A low-profile projection on the east is topped by a gable roof and features a bank of two windows. A CMU chimney is located on the western half of the north elevation near the garage. The north elevation is partially enclosed with a wood privacy fence.

The Mission 66 Residence was completed by November 1958. It was built during the monument's last major construction campaign and possesses features similar to those of other buildings at the monument, such as stucco walls and wood shingles on the roof. The building was constructed within the period of significance and is a contributing building to the historic district. The building retains integrity of materials, design, workmanship, setting, location, feeling and association.

### **Maintenance Shed**

The Maintenance Shed is located in the courtyard north of the two residence buildings. The building is rectangular in plan, sits on a concrete foundation, and features a saltbox roof with exposed rafter tails and wood shingles. The building is thirteen bays wide, clad in stucco, and fronts south. Ten bays feature modern, garage-style roll-up doors. The other three bays have been infilled with pedestrian entrances and windows in various configurations.

The east elevation features an original window bank, characterized by three six-light wood-sash casements topped with a wood header. Original, chamfered rafter tails (four total) are exposed on this elevation. The ridgeline of the east elevation features a large metal vent; other, smaller vents are also located on the roof.

The north elevation is devoid of openings. The north and west elevations reveal the "bank-barn"-style construction method of the west-end additions to the Maintenance Shed (3 bays added in 1958 and four bays added in 1981). The ground level at the northwest corner is approximately one foot below the roofline. The west elevation features one modern vinyl slider window, one chamfered rafter tail, and the exposed concrete foundation.

Originally constructed with six bays and of structural adobe brick on concrete footings (and a partial poured-concrete foundation) in 1936, the Maintenance Shed received two major additions. In 1958, as part of the Mission 66 construction efforts, three additional bays, constructed of CMU, were added to the west side of the building. In 1981, four more bays were added to the west, constructed of gypsum wallboard on a poured-concrete foundation. Other alterations include changes to the original garage doors, which were originally wood-panel roll-up doors devoid of windows. By 1958, fifteen panel wood with three-light roll-up garage doors had replaced the originals. Today, modern metal garage doors and some infilled bays are present; the current doors were installed in 2005.

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The Maintenance Shed has been significantly altered. Although the east elevation as seen from outside the courtyard still conveys the historic profile, massing, materials, design, and workmanship, the south (main) elevation of the building reads as a confused mix of materials and does not convey a unified construction (or addition) date. However, from the public right-of-way (outside the courtyard), the building retains integrity. Future alterations could be done sensitively to restore the historic context of the building, but the Maintenance Shed as it currently stands is a noncontributing building to the historic district. Future repairs and maintenance could include plans for sensitive rehabilitation of the building over time, as per National Park Service policies and the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards and Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.

**Vehicle Shed**

The Vehicle Shed is located within the courtyard between the two residence buildings. The building is rectangular in plan, features a concrete-slab foundation, and has a side-gable roof clad in wood shingles. The north (main) elevation is open to provide access for large maintenance and other vehicles. The east, south, and west elevations are clad in T1-11 and plywood siding.

The Vehicle Shed is a modern structure completed at an unknown date. Although compatible with other structures, the building was constructed outside of the period of significance. The Vehicle Shed is a noncontributing structure within the historic district.

**Courtyard Walls**

The courtyard walls surround the residences and Maintenance Shed area; additional walls are located on the east and south sides of the Campfire Circle. The walls are constructed of CMU with a stucco overlay and are topped with red bricks.

The first courtyard walls were built at the same time as the original Museum. Photos from 1936 depict the adobe-brick walls completed around the museum and in the residence/maintenance shed area, but without a stucco coating. By May, 1942, the walls were beginning to collapse in the west section of the courtyard; it appears that the walls were repaired at that time. Further deterioration occurred over time, and by September, 1949, several sections of the walls had collapsed. The adobe walls were removed and replaced with CMU, in roughly the same alignment and with the same finish, in August 1951. Additional modifications for the walls came with the completion of the Mission 66 Residence and west side addition to the Maintenance Shed in November 1958.

The walls, although reconstructed with CMU in the 1950s, maintain their historic appearance and finish. Built and altered to CMU within the period of significance, they are contributing structures to the historic district. The structures retain integrity of materials, design, workmanship, setting, location, feeling and association.

**Picnic Shelters**

Three picnic shelters are located in the parking area east of the Museum and Visitor Center. Each shelter is built of four wood posts set in concrete footings and features a gable roof clad in wood shingles. The picnic shelters are modern structures completed in 2007. They are compatible with the historic structures but were built outside the period of significance and are noncontributing structures to the historic district.

**Summit Road**

The Summit Road is a two-lane, two-way, reinforced Portland-cement concrete road that extends 1.582 miles from the intersection of Old Oregon Trail to the parking area at the summit of Scotts Bluff. Three vehicular tunnels and a winding road at a maximum 7 percent grade follow the natural contours of the western side of the bluff and lead to a parking area at the top of the geological formation. From the parking area, pedestrian trails lead to panoramic viewpoints and to the Saddle Rock Trail.

The Summit Road was well documented in summer 2000 for the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER No. NE-11). Begun in 1933 and completed in 1940, with additional tunnel portal construction completed in 1989, the road "provides access to the summit of Scotts Bluff while preserving the natural beauty and historical integrity of the site. Built primarily by relief labor during the Depression, the road features concrete slab paving and three short tunnels."<sup>7</sup> Built during the period of significance, the Summit Road is a contributing structure to the historic district. The structures retain integrity of materials, design, workmanship, setting, location, feeling and association.

<sup>7</sup> Alicia Barber, "Scotts Bluff Summit Road, HAER No. NE-11," 2000, 1, Historic American Engineering Record, on file at the Library of Congress.

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### **Saddle Rock Trail**

Saddle Rock Trail, occasionally referred to as the Museum-Summit Trail in historic documents, is a paved path leading from the Museum and Visitor Center to the top of Scotts Bluff. The trail runs along the east side of the bluff, past Scotts Spring, and continues via a series of switchbacks to a pedestrian tunnel through the bluff. The tunnel was carved from the delicate sandstone and today still features the tool marks of its construction as well as the handprints of visitors. Emerging from the tunnel on the north side of the bluff, more switchbacks continue to the summit.

The Saddle Rock Trail was developed concurrently with the Museum and Visitor Center and the Summit Road, ca. 1936. Although it was not historically paved (asphalt surfacing came in the 1950s), it follows roughly the same alignment it did historically. Minor alterations, such as concrete stairs and new CMU retaining walls to replace historic masonry walls (specifically on the north side of the pedestrian tunnel, completed in 2008) have not detracted from the character of the trail. Built within the period of significance, the Saddle Rock Trail is a contributing structure to the historic district. The structure retains integrity of materials, design, workmanship, setting, location, feeling and association.

### **Summit Trail and Observation Points**

The Summit Trail is located at the top of Scotts Bluff, and allows visitors to experience views on both the north and south sides of the monument via short, paved trail sections. The south trail section follows the natural topography of the bluff and provides views of the Saddle Rock Trail and Museum. The north trail section also conforms to the natural topography and affords views to the town of Scottsbluff to the north, as well as the North Platte River, the badlands area of the monument, and flat plains in almost every direction. In clear conditions, other rock formations along the North Platte River are visible from the trail.

Near the north edge of the bluff is a metal survey post, staked there in 1933. The marker has been an excellent method for measuring the erosional environment of the bluff, which is regularly exposed to severe winds and rain. The combined erosive effects are clearly visible to the naked eye, as the metal post was staked level to the surface in 1933 and is now exposed to a depth of approximately one-foot.

The Summit Trail also features three observation points, two of which were constructed in the 1930s. The two 1930s viewpoints are characterized by masonry walls, built by the ERA ca. 1936 and completed by June 1939.<sup>8</sup> One is roughly centered on the north side of the bluff and one is to the west. In order to facilitate construction, temporary work shelters were built on top of the monument, likely to protect masons from severe winds.

The third observation point was built in 1995 to address continued visitor use of a social trail.

The Summit Trail and the 1930s observation points were built during the period of significance and are contributing structures to the historic district. The metal survey post is a contributing object to the historic district. The structures and object retain integrity of materials, design, workmanship, setting, location, feeling and association. The 1995 observation point was built outside the period of significance and is noncontributing.

### **Bike Trail**

The Bike Trail is a modern, paved path that enables visitors to reach the Museum and Visitor Center from the surrounding communities by bicycle. The path borders and is outside monument boundaries on the east side of Scotts Bluff. A segment of the path crosses monument lands and terminates at the Museum and Visitor Center. The Bike Trail is a modern resource built outside of the period of significance and is a noncontributing structure to the monument.

### **Boundary Fences**

The east boundary of the monument is bordered by a fence comprising round wood poles spaced at approximately five-foot intervals, connected via metal cables. This modern fence was constructed ca. 2010 to replace metal poles and barbed wire fencing that dated from 1945. The new fencing is in the historic alignment but is less visually disturbing and more wildlife friendly than the historic. Fences in the monument are considered noncontributing structures.

<sup>8</sup> ERA is synonymous with FERA, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, one of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Depression-era relief programs. FERA was created in 1932 and was replaced by the Works Progress Administration in 1935.

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## Signs and Memorials

Over the years, the monument has had numerous types of signage, interpretive panels, and memorials. Signs have ranged in size, shape, and style from simple, painted wood signs on wood poles to more elaborate signs on concrete bases coated in stucco. Photos from 1936 depict the first museum sign, a rustic wood pole with a hanging wood sign advertising "Museum." Today, the monument features a variety of sign types from a range of dates. For example, the entrances to the monument feature two stucco-clad signs, designed in 1954, informing visitors they are entering Scotts Bluff National Monument, one each at the east and west entrances. A similar sign, located at the intersection of Old Oregon Trail and the Summit Road, advertises the Museum and Headquarters.

In 1966, the Monument undertook a "Sign and Wayside Exhibit Plan," removing many of the original painted wood signs on wood (or sometimes metal) poles. The 1954-style stucco signage remained, and remains today, as did some of the wood signs (specifically, there is at least one chamfered wood post that reads "Museum" with a directional arrow extant on the Saddle Rock Trail). Several new signs were installed at this time. In 1982, another Wayside Exhibit plan was implemented; most of the extant interpretive panels date from this period.

Memorials, such as plaques, benches, and markers, also dot the landscape of the monument. The first known memorial is a granite marker that reads "Oregon Trail Marked by the State of Nebraska 1912 Trail Passed 37 Feet North of this Point Mitchell Pass." Other memorials include a plaque that tells of the legend of Hiram Scott, donated by the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) and originally located at the base of the Zig Zag Trail. The plaque was moved to Scotts Spring in the 1930s and is now located at the top of Scotts Bluff. Also, granite benches located throughout the park are dedicated to various historical persons.

With the exception of the 1912 granite marker (discussed below), signs and memorials are expected to change periodically and are noncontributing objects to the historic district. A full inventory of all signs and memorials within the monument was outside the scope of this nomination and, with the exception of the 1912 granite marker, are not included in the resource count for this nomination.

### 1912 Granite Marker

The 1912 granite marker is not known to have been relocated from its original location. The marker is located in Mitchell Pass and marks the historic location of a section of the Oregon Trail. The 1912 marker is a contributing object to the monument, and retains integrity of materials, design, workmanship, setting, location, feeling and association.

## Archeological Sites and Ruins

According to the original nomination (submitted in 1976 and listed by the Keeper of the National Register in 1978), "prehistoric structures, all of which are unexposed, include four campsites of various Indian tribes, located near the bluff-top parking lot, at the base of the north side of Scotts Bluff, on the east side of Scotts Bluff, and on the south side of South Bluff."<sup>9</sup> A list of classified structures was included as a continuation sheet for the original nomination. The four archeological sites are kept classified within this update in order to protect the historic resources, and are contributing to the monument.

Additional archeological surveys have been conducted at the monument since 1976. In September 1991, Caven P. Clark of the NPS Midwest Archeological Center identified forty-nine previously unrecorded archeological sites (including isolates; see the section on prehistoric archeological sites for clarification on the number of recorded sites in the monument) by pedestrian survey, forty-seven of which are prehistoric.<sup>10</sup> In the spring of 1993, two additional sites were discovered and eight prehistoric sites were tested. Most of these sites were exposed due to continual erosion at the monument. Although the resulting survey report did not formally evaluate the sites for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), either individually or as contributing to the historic district, the report concluded that "[v]irtually all areas of the Monument have the potential for containing buried sites, especially in alluvial deposits at the base of South Bluff and Scotts Bluff."<sup>11</sup>

Further investigation of archeological sites within the monument boundaries occurred in 2008, when Anne M. Wolley Vawser, also of the NPS Midwest Archeological Center, visited the site with park staff. The team recorded four additional

<sup>9</sup> David Arbogast, "National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form: Scotts Bluff National Monument," approved October 3, 1978, 7-1.

<sup>10</sup> Clark, "Archeological Survey of Scotts Bluff National Monument, Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska."

<sup>11</sup> Clark, "Archeological Survey of Scotts Bluff National Monument, Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska," 39.

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sites and an isolated artifact. Additionally, Vawser obtained a small sample of charcoal for radiocarbon dating from one site, documented as 25SF151. The site is an exposed charcoal lens; eroding out of the lens is fire-cracked rock, flakes of brown and gray chert, one groundstone fragment, and several small fragments of burned bone. The collected charcoal sample "was later submitted for analysis and returned a conventional radiocarbon age of 1930 +/- 40 years before present or a calibrated age of BC 10 to AD 140 (Beta #262605)."<sup>12</sup>

Another site recorded during Vawser's visit was 25SF150. Paleontologists had previously collected three artifacts from the location: a projectile point, a biface, and a large flake. Additionally, Vawser's team observed a light scattering of artifacts and bone fragments eroding out of the mesa edges. Evaluation of the previously collected projectile point (a small, corner-notched point made of flint with a convex to straight base) indicated a possible late prehistoric date for the site. The point itself is similar to Galt points, early arrow points found in Montana and Wyoming dating to about 1500 to 900 before present (BP), or the early part of the Late Prehistoric era (1900 to 150 BP) in the high plains area.<sup>13</sup>

In the future, heretofore undiscovered prehistoric and historic archeological sites located within the monument should be evaluated for eligibility to the NRHP individually and as contributing sites to the monument. The following descriptions of the known prehistoric and historic archeological sites should aid future researchers in determining what qualifies a site as contributing to the monument.

### **Prehistoric Archeological Sites**

To clarify, as of the date of this nomination, 48 archeological sites have been documented within the park: 40 are prehistoric, 6 are historic (discussed below), and 2 are multi-component (both prehistoric and historic). These numbers vary from those previously by Clark (1994) and Vawser (2008). The reason for this is that Clark recorded several isolated artifacts (isolates), which are not counted as archeological sites.<sup>14</sup>

To understand the date ranges associated with archeological sites, the Nebraska State Historical Society compiled an archeological timeline.<sup>15</sup> Briefly,

9,000 – 12,000 years ago:	Big Game Hunters (Paleoindian)
2,000 – 9,000 years ago:	Foragers (Plains Archaic)
1,000 – 2,000 years ago:	Early Potters (Plains Woodland)
600 – 1,000 years ago:	Village Farmers (Plains Village)
100 – 400 years ago:	Postcontact Tribes
100 – 300 years ago:	Europeans and Americans

Of the prehistoric sites recorded within the monument, only 9 have a definitive time period associated with them. The above described sites (25SF150 and 25SF150) are just two examples that illustrate a temporal frame of reference for prehistoric activities. In other words, dated prehistoric sites within the monument generally range between 1,930 and 370 years old. Exceptions to this are included on both sides of the timeline. Specifically, site 25SF41 contained a possible stemmed point, which could date to as early as the Plains Archaic stage (BC 6000). Alternately, a single blue glass trade bead was discovered by Marvin Kay on the top of the mesa south of Mitchell Pass. This artifact could be attributed to post-contact tribes, early Euroamerican traders, or immigrants on the Oregon Trail.

Prehistoric archeological sites in the monument include lithic and artifact scatters, habitation sites, rock features, and hearths. Though an exact location and description of each site is not included here (to protect the resources), Table 2 (above) provides the state and NPS site numbers, site type(s), and eligibility evaluations for each.

### **Historic Archeological Sites**

Historic archeological sites recorded at Scotts Bluff have been largely limited to refuse scatters associated with dumping. For example, site 25SF153 is a "moderately sized refuse scatter of historic bottles, glass, and metal artifacts. One liquor bottle, a small green medicine bottle, and two ceramic vessel sherds with maker's marks were collected to help determine the age of the dump.... Based on preliminary research of the collected artifacts the dump dates to the late 1940s or early

<sup>12</sup> Trip Report, Anne M. Wolley Vawser, NPS Midwest Archeological Center (trip conducted September 10-12, 2008), August 8, 2011, 1. On file at the NPS Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln, Nebraska.

<sup>13</sup> Trip Report, Anne M. Wolley Vawser, August 8, 2011, 2.

<sup>14</sup> Personal communication with Anne Vawser, NPS Midwest Archeological Center, October 2011.

<sup>15</sup> Nebraska State Historical Society, Archeological Timeline, <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/archeo/timeline/index.htm>.

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1950s. The park has had several similar historic dumps evaluated previously to determine age and significance in hopes of eventually cleaning up the area. All are similar types of ravine dumps in the northern portion of the park."<sup>16</sup>

Based on the relatively recent dates associated with the historic archeology found at the site, and the nature of said sites (primarily dumping sites), historic sites located within the boundaries of the monument are not generally considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as contributing to the historic district. Exceptions to this include the Oregon Trail ruts, the Zig Zag Trail, and the Hiram Scott Memorial Arch (discussed below). Table 2 (above) provides the state and NPS site numbers, site type(s), and eligibility evaluations for each recorded historic site in the monument. For more information on the individual sites, researchers are encouraged to contact the NPS Midwest Archeological Center in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Oregon Trail

The three-and-one-half miles of distinctive ruts that run through Mitchell Pass mark a section of the Oregon Trail, a significant historic resource in the United States. The ruts are accessed by a paved trail that leads from the Visitor Center and roughly parallels Old Oregon Trail. Along the paved trail sit three covered wagons that the monument uses for display and interpretation.

The ruts mark the westward passage of a half-million individuals seeking new lives in the American West. The segment of the Oregon Trail through Mitchell Pass was also used by Mormon and California emigrants, the Pony Express (1860-61), and the first transcontinental telegraph line (1861). The 1976 nomination notes, "archaeological materials excavated within the boundaries of Scotts Bluff National Monument and historic objects from within the park are historically associated with its primary theme, the Oregon Trail."<sup>17</sup> However, as discussed above, few if any historic archeological sites recorded within the monument date to this period in the monument's history, with the notable exception of the ruts themselves.

In 2011, the National Park Service commissioned the "Oregon Trail Ruts Landscape Study and Environmental Assessment," prepared by Mundus Bishop Design, Inc., and ERO Resource Corporation. The study, among other things, provided an assessment of character-defining features of the Oregon Trail and documented historic and existing conditions. The Oregon Trail, which has been designated as a National Historic Trail, was developed during the period of significance and is a contributing site to the monument. The segment of the trail located within the monument retains integrity of materials, design, workmanship, setting, location, feeling and association.

Zig Zag Trail

The Zig Zag Trail was the first official trail within the monument. The trail was so well constructed, with switchbacks carved into the earth snaking up the east side of the bluff, that even though the trail has been abandoned since the 1930s it is still clearly visible on the landscape. An entrance archway, known as the Hiram Scott Memorial Arch, originally marked the base of the trail. Both the trail and the archway are being allowed to go to ruin.

The Zig Zag Trail was constructed prior to the Museum and Visitor Center, ca. 1927. The trail itself has always been located within the monument boundaries, but vehicular access to the trail, and possibly the physical locations of parking and picnic areas at the base of the trail, were historically on private lands. By the 1930s, the National Park Service recognized this and began plans for construction of new trails and a museum on the south side of the bluff. The Zig Zag Trail was abandoned shortly after the Museum and Saddle Rock Trail were completed. Today, the Zig Zag Trail and the historic access, parking, and picnic areas (no longer extant) are on monument lands.

The Zig Zag Trail predates the Museum and Visitor Center and was one of the first constructed public areas in the Monument. The management policy for the Zig Zag Trail is to allow the trail to go to ruin and, ultimately, for the east side of the bluff to revert back to a natural state. The Zig Zag Trail dates to the period of significance, and is a contributing site to the monument. The trail retains integrity of materials, design, workmanship, setting, location, feeling and association. The management strategy for the trail, since ca. 1940, has been to allow the trail to slowly and deliberately revert to a natural state.

<sup>16</sup> Trip Report, Anne M. Wolley Vawser, August 8, 2011, 2.

<sup>17</sup> Arbogast, "National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form: Scotts Bluff National Monument," 9.

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### The Hiram Scott Memorial Arch

An entrance archway, known as the Hiram Scott Memorial Arch, originally marked the base of the Zig Zag Trail. Built of concrete, stone, and stucco, the arch was dedicated on July 8, 1930. The arch, along with a bronze plaque, was erected by the Katahdin Chapter of the DAR and was dedicated by William Henry Jackson. The ruins of the arch are still visible at the base of the trail. In 1932, the DAR plaque commemorating Hiram Scott was moved from the base of the Zig Zag Trail (adjacent to the archway) to a new home at Scotts Spring. The plaque has since been relocated to the top of Scotts Bluff. Like the trail, the archway is deliberately being allowed to go to ruin.

The Hiram Scott Memorial Arch predates the Museum and Visitor Center and was part of one of the first constructed public areas in the Monument. The management policy for the archway is to allow it to go to ruin and, ultimately, for the east side of the bluff to revert back to a natural state. The arch dates to the period of significance, and is a contributing site to the monument. It has been recorded as an archeological structure (SCBL00058.000) and, for the purposes of this nomination, is a contributing archeological site to the monument. The arch retains integrity of materials, design, workmanship, setting, location, feeling and association.

## **Inholdings and Rights-of-Way**

The following resources are located within the boundaries but are not affiliated with the monument. Evaluation of these resources for individual eligibility to the NRHP is outside of the scope of this nomination; the holdings and rights-of-way are inventoried here due to their location within monument boundaries, and are noncontributing structures to the monument. In some cases, resources listed below may be eligible to National Register, either individually or as contributing to a district, regardless of the fact that they are noncontributing to the Scotts Bluff National Monument Historic District.

### Gering-Ft. Laramie Irrigation District Canal

The Gering-Ft. Laramie Irrigation District is a private company based in Lyman, Nebraska. The Gering-Ft. Laramie canal is one of two canals that divert water from the Fort Laramie Canal of the North Platte Project at the Whalen Diversion, located 6.5 miles west-northwest of the town of Fort Laramie, Wyoming.<sup>18</sup> The Gering-Ft. Laramie canal right-of-way is thought to date to ca. 1900 in its current alignment through the monument. The canal enters monument boundaries in the southeast corner, crossing under Old Oregon Trail near the eastern boundary. A service road parallels the canal. The canal flows roughly north-northeast before exiting monument lands.

The Gering-Ft. Laramie Irrigation District canal may be eligible for the NRHP. At least one historic context specific to surface water irrigation in Nebraska has been written.<sup>19</sup> To date, the only known extant historic context documents pertaining specifically to historic canals, facilities, or irrigation districts associated with the North Platte Project are those compiled by the Bureau of Reclamation for use in National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 consultation for proposed federal undertakings in Scotts Bluff County, also on file with the SHPO. Previous Section 106 evaluations have classified the structure as eligible, although most of the canal has not been inventoried and evaluated in terms of NRHP criteria.<sup>20</sup>

Regardless of the Gering-Ft. Laramie Irrigation District Canal's individual eligibility to the NRHP (an evaluation of which was outside of the scope of this nomination), the structure was not historically associated with development of Scotts Bluff National Monument and is noncontributing to the historic district.

### Gering Irrigation District Canal

The Gering Irrigation District is a private company. It is a continuation of the Mitchell Irrigation District Canal, although this name applies only outside of the monument. The canal/district changes names just west of the monument boundary. The canal crosses the boundary in the northwest part of the monument and flows roughly east-southeast through the badlands, exiting the boundaries in the northeast part of the monument. The Gering Irrigation District right-of-way is thought to date to ca. 1900 in roughly its current alignment through the monument. Some minor changes to the alignment within monument boundaries are known to have occurred.

<sup>18</sup> Goshen Irrigation District, "GID Organization/History," <http://www.goshenirrigation.com/aboutus.aspx>.

<sup>19</sup> Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office, "Historic Context Report 08.13: Surface Water Irrigation in Nebraska," n.d. On file at the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office, Lincoln, NE.

<sup>20</sup> Personal communication with John H. Lawson, Area Manager, United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Reclamation, September 29, 2011.

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The Gering Irrigation District canal may be eligible for the NRHP; however, individual evaluation of the resource is outside the scope of this nomination. As noted above, the only extant historic contexts for surface water irrigation are on file with the Nebraska SHPO. It is unknown if the Gering Irrigation District has had specific evaluation. As a privately owned resource, the district is not necessarily subject to Section 106 of the NHPA and may not have been previously evaluated. Regardless of the Gering Irrigation District Canal's individual eligibility to the NRHP, the structure was not historically associated with development of Scotts Bluff National Monument and is noncontributing to the historic district.

**Central Irrigation District Canal**

The Central Irrigation District is a private company and one of several responsible for maintaining the Gering Valley Drain Project. The Central Irrigation District canal takes water directly from the North Platte River near the northern boundary of the monument. The canal flows east-southeast, parallel to the river, out of the monument boundary and into the town of Gering. The Central Irrigation District Canal is thought to date at least to 1942, when historic photographs on file at the monument depict car bodies being used for diversion at the head gate.

The Central Irrigation District canal may be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places; however, individual evaluation of the resource is outside the scope of this nomination. As noted above, the only extant historic contexts for surface water irrigation are on file with the Nebraska SHPO. It is not clear whether the Central Irrigation District has had specific evaluation. As a privately owned resource, the district is not necessarily subject to Section 106 of the NHPA and may not have been previously evaluated. Regardless of the Central Irrigation District Canal's individual eligibility to the NRHP, the structure was not historically associated with development of Scotts Bluff National Monument and is noncontributing to the historic district.

**Union Pacific Railroad**

Running parallel to the North Platte River on the north edge of the monument boundaries is the two-track Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR). The railroad is still in use, with upward of seventy-five trains running on a daily basis. This level of traffic necessitated the expansion of the line from a single track to a double track at an unknown date but sometime since establishment of the monument.

The UPRR may be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Historic railroad alignments are often associated with events that have made significant contributions to the broad patterns of American history. While the UPRR alignment dates to ca. 1910 in the Scotts Bluff area, the alignment within monument boundaries was expanded from a single track to a two-track at an unknown date to accommodate for the heavy traffic the railroad still sees today. This likely required alterations to the historic track, possibly including the alignment, rails, and other features, and definitely added a second track; the combined alterations may have resulted in a loss of integrity of materials, design, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Regardless of the Union Pacific Railroad's individual eligibility to the NRHP, the evaluation of which is outside the scope of this nomination, the structure was not historically associated with development of the Scotts Bluff National Monument and is noncontributing to the historic district.

**Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) Transmission Line**

Two transmission lines cross the monument near the eastern border: the WAPA transmission line and the Roosevelt Public Power District (RPPD) transmission line. The WAPA line was historically located outside of the boundaries, but the 1956 expansion of the monument enveloped the transmission line right-of-way.

The WAPA line may be eligible for the NRHP. Transmission line alignments are often associated with events that have made significant contributions to the broad patterns of American history. The line itself, comprising wood H-poles, transmission cables, conductors, insulators, and mounting equipment, appears to retain integrity. Regardless of the WAPA Transmission Line's individual eligibility to the NRHP, the evaluation of which is outside the scope of this nomination, the structure was not historically associated with development of the Scotts Bluff National Monument and is noncontributing to the historic district.

**Roosevelt Public Power District (RPPD) Transmission Line**

The RPPD transmission line was historically located outside of monument boundaries, but the 1956 expansion of the monument enveloped the transmission line right-of-way. The RPPD line may be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. As noted above, transmission line alignments are often associated with events that have made significant contributions to the broad patterns of American history. The line itself, comprising wood H-poles, transmission cables, conductors, insulators, and mounting equipment, appears to retain integrity. Regardless of the RPPD Transmission Line's

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individual eligibility to the NRHP, the evaluation of which is outside the scope of this nomination, the structure was not historically associated with development of the Scotts Bluff National Monument and is noncontributing to the historic district.

### **Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD) Radio Tower**

The NPPD radio tower is located near the eastern border of the monument, east of and adjacent to the former Scotts Bluff Country Club site. The NPPD was formed in 1970 and its headquarters building, the historic Western Public Service Building in Scottsbluff, Nebraska, was listed in the National Register in 2004. The radio tower located on monument land is a tall metal tower painted red and white and laterally braced with cables. A small CMU service building and chain-link fence are located at the base of the tower. It is unlikely that this modern resource is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places; however, evaluation of the resource is outside the scope of this nomination. The NPPD Radio Tower was not historically associated with development of the Scotts Bluff National Monument, was constructed outside of the period of significance, and is a noncontributing structure to the historic district.

### **Old Oregon Trail**

The county road called Old Oregon Trail (formerly Nebraska State Highway 92) divides the monument between Scotts Bluff and South Bluff, running approximately southeast-to-northwest through the monument through Mitchell Pass. Old Oregon Trail connects with U.S. 26 approximately twenty miles east of the monument and with State Highway 29 about three miles north of headquarters. Old Oregon Trail parallels the Oregon Trail ruts within the monument boundaries. The road was graded and graveled in 1932. On March 10, 1937, NPS received a quit-claim deed from Scotts Bluff County for title to the portion of the highway that passes through the monument. The highway was graveled, realigned, and generally improved as part of a CCC project from 1937 to 1940.

Today, Old Oregon Trail is a two-lane, asphalt-clad roadway typical of those found throughout the country. It is unlikely that Old Oregon Trail is eligible for listing in the NRHP; however, evaluation of the resource is outside the scope of this nomination. Old Oregon Trail was not historically associated with development of the Scotts Bluff National Monument and is a noncontributing structure to the historic district.

### **Character Defining Features**

Buildings constructed during the Civilian Conservation Corps era were built of structural adobe bricks clad in stucco and featured wood-shingle gable roofs. Two exceptions apply: first, the main entrance to the Visitor Center is not clad in stucco and instead features exposed brick. Second, the tower on the Visitor Center features a hip roof. Later construction mimicked the adobe style by using CMU or brick clad in stucco.

Character-defining features of most buildings and structures at the monument include adobe, brick, or CMU clad in stucco; some exposed-brick details; wood-shingle roofs; and exposed wood brackets at the roof line. Historic masonry, such as original stone walls at the summit, depict rustic CCC-era styling. The Summit Road features unadorned concrete construction techniques reminiscent of the 1930s-era streamlined Moderne style, designed to blend into the surrounding landscape.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- Archeology: Prehistoric
- Archeology: Historic – Non-Aboriginal
- Conservation
- Entertainment/Recreation
- Exploration/Settlement
- Architecture

**Period of Significance**

1930-370 BP - 1958

**Significant Dates**

- Prehistoric: Study of Aboriginal Cultures
- 1812-1869: Settlement and the Oregon Trail
- 1919: Proclamation of National Monument
- 1933-1938: CCC Construction Campaigns
- 1949: Jackson Memorial Wing Addition
- 1958: Mission 66 Construction Campaign

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

- Prehistoric Unknown
- Euro-American

**Architect/Builder**

- U.S. Dept. of Interior, National Park Service
- Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance, 1930-370 BP through 1958, includes known and potential archeological sites located within the monument boundaries that have yielded or are likely to yield information important in prehistory, specifically the Early Potters (Plains Woodland) period; association with historic archeology relative to western settlement and the Oregon Trail (1812-1869); the proclamation of the monument (1919); initial and expanded construction campaigns conducted by the National Park Service with labor provided by New Deal-era programs (1933-1938); the addition of the Jackson Memorial Wing to the Museum and Visitor Center (1949); and construction during the Mission 66 era (1958), the last major construction campaign completed at the monument.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary):** N/A

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph**

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Scotts Bluff National Monument is significant under Criterion A, associations with broad patterns of American history, for the role it played as a landmark during prehistoric times as well as the historic western migration. While little is known regarding the importance of Scotts Bluff to prehistoric peoples and Native American tribes, archeological sites found within the monument boundaries indicate habitation dating to at least the Plains Woodland period (1930-370 BP). The historical significance of Scotts Bluff as an important navigational aid and "psychological milestone" during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century is well documented via the journals and accounts of overland travelers.<sup>21</sup> Many emigrants traveling the Mormon Trail and the Oregon-California Trail recorded seeing the bluff and were impressed by its size and form. They considered it a benchmark on their westward journey, and their guidebooks and maps identified it as such.

Scotts Bluff National Monument is also significant under Criterion C, for distinctive characteristics of a period and method of construction. The New Deal-era architecture required the construction and use of thousands of hand-made adobe bricks by the CCC. The style—that of adobe brick clad in stucco—was subsequently mimicked during later building campaigns at the monument, including those of the Mission 66 era. The Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival style of the buildings at the monument were neither typical nor atypical in Nebraska at the time, and they represent larger trends in the built environment of the region.

Finally, Scotts Bluff National Monument is significant under Criterion D, for having yielded and the potential to yield important information in both prehistory and history. The original NRHP nomination for the monument included a list of classified archeological resources. Subsequent explorations, and changing trends in historic interests and survey methods, have and are likely to yield further finds over time.

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### Narrative Statement of Significance

Scotts Bluff is significant for its paleontological and archeological resources, which have contributed to present-day understandings of prehistoric animals and peoples of the high plains. The role the site played in western migration, as a marker on the historic Oregon and Mormon trails, speaks to its significance in historic, nonaboriginal archeology, as well as its significance in the history of exploration and settlement. From its establishment as a national monument in 1919, the conservation of the site has been a driving management principal, with monument lands recognized as yielding important information about historic and contemporary animal, cultural, and natural resources. Finally, the monument is an important recreational space, as evidenced through its sustained and multifaceted use since its founding. The monument features New Deal-era architecture constructed by the CCC in a Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival style. Contributing resources at the monument retain integrity of materials, design, workmanship, feeling, association, location and setting.

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### Developmental history/additional historic context information

#### Paleontological History

Nebraska possesses a wealth of paleontological history, and the region along the North Platte and around Scotts Bluff is no exception. Historian Earl Harris noted that records exist of fossil discoveries as early as 1847, "when a fur trader showed the jawbone of a Titanotherium to Dr. Hiram Prout of St. Louis."<sup>22</sup> In 1868, Yale professor Othniel Charles Marsh carried out a scientific excursion west and collected fossil specimens in Nebraska, finding antecedents of the modern-day horse. Two years later, Marsh mounted another expedition to Nebraska, this time with the aid of Yale graduate students. Along the North Platte and Loup Fork rivers, the group successfully uncovered "primitive horses, miniature camels, and a mastodon."<sup>23</sup> Other fossils found in the area include saber-toothed tigers, prehistoric rhinoceroses, and giant turtles.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Master Plan, Scotts Bluff National Monument, Nebraska* (1976), as quoted in Ron Cockrell, "Scotts Bluff National Monument, Nebraska: An Administrative History, 1960-1983,"

[http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/scbl/adhi/adhi1.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/scbl/adhi/adhi1.htm).

<sup>22</sup> Earl R. Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument* (Gering, NE: Oregon Trail Museum Association, 1962), 2-3. A titanotherium is an extinct horned ancestor of the modern horse dating from the Eocene and Oligocene eras.

<sup>23</sup> William H. Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire: the Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 425-26.

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## Prehistory and Native Tribes

### Lifeways in Western Nebraska to 1500

Humans have been in the central High Plains region for about 12,000 years. Archeologists define the cultural eras for this region in slightly different ways, but for the purposes of this nomination, the salient phases are Paleoindian (12,000-9,000 BP), Plains Archaic (9,000-2,000 BP), Plains Woodland (1000 BP-1000 CE [common era]), Plains Village (1000-1500 CE), and Historic (since 1500 CE).<sup>25</sup>

Paleoindian peoples were drawn to the High Plains by megafauna such as mammoths and bison. They practiced a mixed hunting and gathering subsistence strategy, a major component of which was the pursuit of big game. The Scottsbluff Bison Quarry near Signal Butte reflects hunting activity in this period. The site is a large 9,000- to 10,000-year old deposit of bison bones from a now-extinct species (*Bison antiquus*), along with some dart points, flakes, and charcoal fragments.<sup>26</sup> The Scottsbluff projectile point type, named for this site, was used across the Plains from Texas to Canada and also has also been found in the Great Lakes region.<sup>27</sup> Another Paleoindian bison kill site was found on Ash Hollow Creek.<sup>28</sup>

A shift to warmer, drier conditions altered the grasslands and caused the megafauna to disappear. Subsistence strategies for humans in western Nebraska changed accordingly, creating the pattern termed Plains Archaic. Between 9,000 and 2,000 years ago, Plains Archaic peoples were nomadic and relied on a wide range of plants and animals, a more diverse set of resources than during the Paleoindian period.<sup>29</sup> Archeological sites in the region such as Signal Butte and the Bisterfeldt Potato Cellar (Gering) provide evidence of the Plains Archaic cultural pattern.<sup>30</sup>

Archeological material at Signal Butte indicates three separate periods of human occupation: a 5,000-year-old hunting complex, a pre-Woodland phase about 1,500 years old, and a Ceramic (Woodland) Period about 300 years ago.<sup>31</sup> Historian Elliott West considered this site one of the "clear and recurring signs of an erratic climate forcing major adjustments" in subsistence strategies. Some of these strategies left behind material evidence, such as that at Signal Butte, while others were more ephemeral.<sup>32</sup> Archeologist Jack Hofman called Signal Butte a "pivotal site . . . in demonstrating a long occupation sequence in the Plains region."<sup>33</sup>

Climate change continued, and a wetter phase and cooler phase began about 2,000 years ago.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, Woodland cultural patterns became more evident in western Nebraska, signified by the use of pottery. Plains Woodland peoples practiced a mixed horticultural and hunting subsistence strategy. Archeologist Amy Koch wrote of this period,

<sup>24</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 3.

<sup>25</sup> This chronological framework is drawn primarily from Amy Koch, *High Plains Archeology*, Explore Nebraska Archeology No. 5 (Nebraska State Historical Society, 2000), and Jack L. Hofman, ed., *Archeology and Paleoecology of the Central Great Plains* (Fayetteville, AR: Arkansas Archeological Survey, 1996). Hofman prefers the term "Mesoinian" to "Archaic" (79).

<sup>26</sup> C. Bertrand Schultz and Loren Eiseley, "Paleontological Evidence for the Antiquity of the Scottsbluff Bison Quarry and Its Associated Artifacts," *American Anthropologist* N.S. 37 (1935): 307, 310; Amy Koch, *High Plains Archeology*, n.p. [6].

<sup>27</sup> Noel D. Justice, *Stone Age Spear and Arrow Points of the Midcontinental and Eastern United States: A Modern Survey and Reference* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 47-49; Jack L. Hofman, "Early Hunter-Gatherers of the Central Great Plains: Paleoindian and Mesoinian (Archaic) Cultures," in *Archeology and Paleoecology of the Central Great Plains*, 70.

<sup>28</sup> Koch, *High Plains Archeology*, [7].

<sup>29</sup> Koch, *High Plains Archeology*, [7]; LuAnn Wandsnider, "Prehistoric High Plains Foragers: Starving Nomads, Affluent Foragers?", *Great Plains Research* 9 (Spring 1999): 14.

<sup>30</sup> Koch, *High Plains Archeology*, [9].

<sup>31</sup> Merrill J. Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument, Nebraska* (Government Printing Office: Washington, D.C., 1958), 58.

<sup>32</sup> Elliott West, *The Way to the West: Essays on the Central Plains* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 8.

<sup>33</sup> Hofman, "Early Hunter-Gatherers of the Central Great Plains," 89.

<sup>34</sup> Wandsnider, "Prehistoric High Plains Foragers," 10.

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"Woodland cultures in the Panhandle region lived in fairly small groups, utilized open campsites, and used skin tents for shelter. Evidence also indicates they used natural shelters such as Ash Hollow Cave in the North Platte valley."<sup>35</sup>

No sharp break occurred between Archaic and Plains Woodland cultures. In fact, Woodland traits appeared during the Archaic period, and Archaic lifeways persisted into the Woodland period. As archeologist Jack Hofman has pointed out, "permanent structures, storage, use of ceramic objects, and plant processing equipment all appear thousands of years before the spread of Woodland trains and horticultural economies on the Central Plains." The hunter-gatherers who utilized the region during the Woodland period "represent[ed] a variety of different traditions" and persisted until Euroamericans displaced them.<sup>36</sup>

Plains Woodland camps, according to archeologist Jeffrey Eighmy, "are often located along ecotones. Many are on stream terraces with easy access to the upland and bottomland communities . . ." Such sites usually contain hearths and fire pits, hunting and gathering tools, and pottery, but they do not generally include "permanent habitation structures."<sup>37</sup> Woodland peoples consumed a wide range of animals, along with fish and mollusks. Little plant evidence has been found at these sites, but that is likely because the plant remains have not survived, or because archeological techniques to recover plant evidence have not been employed.<sup>38</sup>

The Plains Village era began about 1,000 years ago. Archeologist Brad Logan distinguished Plains Villagers from Woodland peoples "by distinctive traits in their lithic, ceramic, and modified bone assemblages, changes in settlement/subsistence patterns, house forms, and evidence of an increasing reliance on domestic plant foods, including corn, beans, squash, sunflowers, and marsh elder."<sup>39</sup> During this period, communities based in horticultural villages in the Republican River drainage (Upper Republican culture) traveled to western Nebraska for seasonal hunts. The High Plains served as a "secondary utilization area" for Upper Republican groups, whose core use area was to the east.<sup>40</sup> High Plains sites connected with the Plains Village period are primarily camps with no evidence of structures, burials, or horticulture.<sup>41</sup>

In addition to seasonal use by villagers from the east, nomadic peoples continued to hunt on the High Plains. A nomadic lifeway termed "Dismal River" culture, a predecessor of Plains Apache culture, is reflected at sites throughout western Nebraska that are 300 to 350 years old.<sup>42</sup> Groups from the Rocky Mountain front also hunted in the region.<sup>43</sup>

Four prehistoric archeological sites were found at Scotts Bluff in surveys conducted in 1965 by Wendell Frantz and in 1975 by Marvin Kay.<sup>44</sup> Caven P. Clark conducted an archeological survey at the monument in the early 1990s and identified additional sites, all but two of which are prehistoric.<sup>45</sup> His prehistoric finds ranged from perhaps 8,000 BP to 1450 CE. Several charcoal samples provided "evidence of seasonal occupations by small groups engaged in food collecting activities."<sup>46</sup> Scotts Spring, he wrote, "appeared to be a complex stratified site" with a long occupational history,

<sup>35</sup> Koch, *High Plains Archeology*, [9].

<sup>36</sup> Hofman, "Early Hunter-Gatherers of the Central Great Plains," 41.

<sup>37</sup> Jeffrey L. Eighmy, "The Central High Plains: A Cultural Historical Summary," in *Plains Indians, A.D. 500-1500: The Archaeological Past of Historic Groups*, ed. Karl H. Schlesier (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 228.

<sup>38</sup> Eighmy, "The Central High Plains: A Cultural Historical Summary," 229; Mary J. Adair, "Woodland Complexes in the Central Great Plains," in *Archeology and Paleoecology of the Great Plains*, 122.

<sup>39</sup> Brad Logan, "The Plains Village Period on the Central Plains," in *Archeology and Paleoecology of the Great Plains*, 123.

<sup>40</sup> Eighmy, "The Central High Plains: A Cultural Historical Summary," 236-237.

<sup>41</sup> Eighmy, "The Central High Plains: A Cultural Historical Summary," 234.

<sup>42</sup> Koch, *High Plains Archeology*, [11].

<sup>43</sup> Alice B. Kehoe, *North American Indians: A Comprehensive Account*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1992), 296.

<sup>44</sup> Clark, "Archeological Survey of Scotts Bluff National Monument," 1.

<sup>45</sup> Clark, "Archeological Survey of Scotts Bluff National Monument," i, 1. See Section 7 for clarification regarding the exact number of sites at the monument.

<sup>46</sup> Clark, "Archeological Survey of Scotts Bluff National Monument," 39.

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"which may span the Late Archaic to Protohistoric periods."<sup>47</sup> The several springs at the monument, he concluded, "were of undoubted significance to the prehistoric settlement system."<sup>48</sup>

Clark found lithic artifacts, flakes, and scatters, ceramic sherds, animal bone, charcoal, a stone ring, and hearth features.<sup>49</sup> He also found "a quadrilateral piece of iron with a circular hole . . . of unknown function or age."<sup>50</sup> Clark's surveys did not yield any items or sites connected with the fur trade or Overland Trail, but he did locate a "small historic dump site."<sup>51</sup> He also recorded the site of the former Civilian Conservation Corps camp, where he found twentieth-century trash.<sup>52</sup> Other historic-era finds included trash from the former Scottsbluff Country Club, broken plate glass, and stone walls.<sup>53</sup>

In 1995, archeologist Vergil Noble of the NPS's Midwest Archeological Center (MWAC) explained that the site density within the park is moderate. But, he commented, "the number is more impressive when one considers that much of the park has very steep terrain that would be uninhabitable." Most known sites have been exposed by erosion, and Noble hypothesized that many more "are likely to lie undiscovered beneath the surface."<sup>54</sup>

### Early Historic Period, 1500 to 1830

The Historic period began on the central Plains in the mid-1500s, when Spanish explorers reached villagers in present-day Kansas. Until the late 1700s, Native Americans in the region had little direct contact with Europeans. Instead, the effects of activities in more distant regions, such as the French and British fur trade in the Great Lakes and upper Mississippi region and the Spanish colonization of New Mexico, rippled into the interior. The arrival of Europeans caused dislocations and created new opportunities for Native Americans, one indirect result of which was the movement of newly nomadic groups onto the central Plains.

The Pawnee Indians occupied a territory west of the Missouri River and stretching from the Elkhorn River in the north to the Kansas and Republican rivers in the south.<sup>55</sup> By the mid-nineteenth century, four autonomous groups (Skiri, Chawai, Kitkahahki, and Pitahawirata) had coalesced to form a larger tribal entity. The Skiri Pawnee, who lived along the Loup River, hunted as far west as the forks of the Platte River.<sup>56</sup> They participated in the fur trade with both the Spanish and French throughout the eighteenth century, and following the Louisiana Purchase, they began trading with Americans and entering into treaties with the United States.<sup>57</sup>

While the Pawnee had occupied their territory at least since the mid-1500s, the other Indians in western Nebraska were relatively recent arrivals.<sup>58</sup> The Lakota (Teton Sioux) began moving westward from Minnesota in the early eighteenth century.<sup>59</sup> Like other agricultural communities in the Midwest, they experienced pressure from Euroamerican settlement and other tribes from the east. Nomadic hunting provided a new set of economic opportunities and drew them onto the plains.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians were pushed out of Minnesota (by the Sioux), into the Black Hills

<sup>47</sup> Clark, "Archeological Survey of Scotts Bluff National Monument," 20.

<sup>48</sup> Clark, "Archeological Survey of Scotts Bluff National Monument," 40.

<sup>49</sup> Clark, "Archeological Survey of Scotts Bluff National Monument," *passim*.

<sup>50</sup> Clark, "Archeological Survey of Scotts Bluff National Monument," 26.

<sup>51</sup> Clark, "Archeological Survey of Scotts Bluff National Monument," 6, 16.

<sup>52</sup> Clark, "Archeological Survey of Scotts Bluff National Monument," 29.

<sup>53</sup> Clark, "Archeological Survey of Scotts Bluff National Monument," 29, 36.

<sup>54</sup> Vergil E. Noble, Supervisory Archeologist, "Archeological Resources at Scotts Bluff National Monument: Research Summary and Management Issues," October 11, 1995, File: Archeology Reports-SCBL: Folder 1," Curatorial Files, Scotts Bluff National Monument, Gering, Nebraska.

<sup>55</sup> Douglas R. Parks, "Pawnee," *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 13, pt. 1 (Plains), volume editor Raymond J. DeMallie, series editor William C. Sturtevant (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 515 (Figure 1).

<sup>56</sup> Parks, "Pawnee," 515.

<sup>57</sup> Parks, "Pawnee," 517-19.

<sup>58</sup> Parks, "Pawnee," 515.

<sup>59</sup> Kehoe, *North American Indians*, 303.

<sup>60</sup> Kehoe, *North American Indians*, 298.

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(by northern plains groups), and then to the south and west (by the Lakota).<sup>61</sup> They arrived in the Platte River region in the 1820s and occupied territory south of the North Platte River, while the Lakota were primarily north of the river.<sup>62</sup> Their subsistence strategies centered on hunting bison.

The Pawnee bands practiced a seasonal cycle that involved planting and tending to crops from May to June, hunting bison in July and August, harvesting crops in September, hunting bison again in late fall, camping in creek bottoms during the winter, and returning to their villages in March.<sup>63</sup>

The Oglala Sioux (Lakota) and the Skiri Pawnee competed for control of Platte River hunting grounds in the 1830s, at the same time Euroamericans began emigrating to Oregon via the Platte. In 1833, the Pawnee ceded their land south of the Platte, but they were permitted to continue hunting south of the river "during the pleasure of the President."<sup>64</sup> Weakened by a smallpox epidemic in 1838, the Skiri Pawnee lost an 1839 battle with the Oglala "that cost the Pawnees between eighty and one-hundred warriors and led to the *de facto* surrender of the Platte hunting grounds by the Skidis [Skiris]."<sup>65</sup> When Euroamerican emigration along the Platte increased in the 1840s, the Sioux were in control of the western Platte hunting territory.

Although Native Americans undoubtedly knew about Scotts Bluff and encountered it the course of hunting in the North Platte River Valley, their understandings of the formation have not been recorded. In 1942, 82-year-old Edgar Fire Thunder, a Sioux from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, visited the summit. He recalled camping across the river from Scotts Bluff in 1865. But the newspaper article reporting his visit did not indicate what significance Fire Thunder may have attached to Scotts Bluff.<sup>66</sup>

## European and American Exploration and Expansion

### Early Exploration and the Fur Trade

Prior to the nineteenth century, there was little formal European exploration of the vast trans-Mississippi territory stretching to the Rocky Mountains. In 1541, the Spanish explorer Coronado entered the area in search of gold and riches supposedly held by the Quivira Indians, but he gave up the quest in modern-day Kansas having found "only a squalid Indian village."<sup>67</sup> Little record of further explorations exists until an ill-fated expedition led by General Pedro de Villasur nearly two-hundred years later. In 1720, Villasur and his contingent had reached the territory that is now Nebraska at the forks of the Platte River, but they met their deaths at the hands of the Pawnee.<sup>68</sup> The French also made forays into the land north of the port of New Orleans, better known as the Louisiana Territory. In 1739, the brothers Pierre and Paul Mallet crossed Nebraska, although they remained predominantly in the east. Tracing a route along the Platte River, the brothers are credited with giving the river its name, which has been variously described as meaning "flat" or "shallow."<sup>69</sup>

By the turn of the nineteenth century, through agreements between France and Spain, the Louisiana Territory was administered by Spain but owned by France. In a clandestine 1801 treaty between the two nations (between Napoleon and his brother, to be more precise), Spain retroceded control of Louisiana to France. President Thomas Jefferson, having already contemplated sending scientific expeditions to explore and map the territory, soon offered to purchase

<sup>61</sup> William R. Swagerty, "History of the United States Plains Until 1850," *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 13, pt. 1 (Plains), 256.

<sup>62</sup> West, *The Way to the West*, 10, 15-16.

<sup>63</sup> Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 171.

<sup>64</sup> David J. Wishart, *An Unspeakable Sadness: The Dispossession of the Nebraska Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 63.

<sup>65</sup> Richard White, "The Winning of the West: The Expansion of the Western Sioux in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Journal of American History* 65: 2 (September 1978): 337.

<sup>66</sup> "We Should Have Stayed,' Aged Sioux Says on Seeing Valley," [clipping from unidentified newspaper], October 21, 1942, File: "Park Operations 1937-1941, Manuscript File," Curatorial Files, Scotts Bluff National Monument, Gering, Nebraska.

<sup>67</sup> Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 2.

<sup>68</sup> Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 2; Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 3.

<sup>69</sup> Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 2-3; Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 4.

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New Orleans from France.<sup>70</sup> Napoleon responded with a counteroffer to sell the entire territory, and Jefferson agreed. On July 4, 1803, newspapers announced the United States had purchased Louisiana Territory the previous April. Within a year, Jefferson had an expedition prepared to explore, map, and catalog what lay beyond the Mississippi.<sup>71</sup>

The 1804-1806 Lewis and Clark expedition did not travel near Scotts Bluff. But, as historical geographer David Wishart has commented, Lewis and Clark "acted as the catalyst for the American fur trade of the West" by opening the upper Missouri River.<sup>72</sup> Noted Scotts Bluff historian Merrill J. Mattes concurred, writing that following the Corps of Discovery "came the fur trappers and traders."<sup>73</sup>

The first Euroamerican to document sighting Scotts Bluff was fur trader Robert Stuart, who worked for John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Company.<sup>74</sup> Stuart and six others left Astoria in June 1812, carrying correspondence to New York. In October, they discovered an easy passage over the Continental Divide, south of the Wind River Range (South Pass). Stuart's party continued down the North Platte, camping near Scotts Bluff on December 25, 1812.<sup>75</sup> The central overland trail to Oregon and California would later take the same path in reverse, going up the North Platte and crossing the Rocky Mountains at South Pass. But until the mid-1820s, fur traders did not use this route.

In 1820, Major Stephen H. Long led the first U.S. government-sanctioned expedition along the Platte River route, crossing western Nebraska on the way to the Rocky Mountains of Colorado.<sup>76</sup> Long's expedition produced a map of the region and also resulted in the successful collection of scientific artifacts.<sup>77</sup> Significantly, however, Long labeled the area of the Great Plains on his map as the "Great Desert," an appellation that would dissuade Americans from settling the region for some time to come.

In the early nineteenth century, the lands between the upper reaches of the Missouri and the Rocky Mountains became a quasi-battleground of the fur trade. Enterprising men trapped in the mountains and river valleys for the vast wealth of furs. They worked either independently or as contracted employees of the larger fur-trading companies, particularly the American Fur Company and the Rocky Mountain Fur Company (RMFC), the two main competitors in the region. To facilitate the gathering of these goods from the immense span of the Rockies, William Ashley of the RMFC developed the rendezvous system in 1825, where trappers would gather annually at a point in the trapping region to cash in their harvest, which was then transported east by Ashley's caravans, as opposed to the men making the journey east to established forts to sell their furs.<sup>78</sup> In the mid-1820s, Ashley utilized the Platte overland route to access the central Rockies, further establishing a presence in western Nebraska.<sup>79</sup>

In the 1830s, the RMFC dissolved while the American Fur Company concentrated its efforts on the upper Missouri, and by the end of the decade the fur trade was on the decline.<sup>80</sup> But the knowledge of the territory gained from these early explorers, trappers, and traders had demonstrated that the vast territory west of the Mississippi was not the "Great Desert" Long had termed it.

<sup>70</sup> Stephen E. Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 72-73, 93.

<sup>71</sup> Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage*, 101-102.

<sup>72</sup> David J. Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West, 1807-1840: a Geographical Synthesis* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 22.

<sup>73</sup> Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 3.

<sup>74</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 4; Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire*, 33.

<sup>75</sup> Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire*, 33-34.

<sup>76</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 4; Frank N. Schubert, *Vanguard of Expansion: Army Engineers in the Trans-Mississippi West, 1819-1879* (Washington: Government Printing Office, n.d.), 3.

<sup>77</sup> Schubert, *Vanguard of Expansion*, 3.

<sup>78</sup> Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West*, 124.

<sup>79</sup> Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West*, 122-124.

<sup>80</sup> Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire*, 163; Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West*, 150-151, 161.

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Scotts Bluff was named after Hiram Scott, one of William Ashley's fur traders who died on an 1828 journey eastward out of the Rockies. His skeleton was found near the bluffs in 1829, but the circumstances of his death remain a mystery.<sup>81</sup> The name Scotts Bluff first appeared in print in 1837, and the first-known use of it on a published map was in 1840.<sup>82</sup> During the period of overland migration (1840s-1860s), travelers generally used the term "Scott's Bluffs" (in the plural) to refer to the chain of formations extending west from the most prominent bluff and including the Wildcat Hills.<sup>83</sup>

In 1842, Lieutenant John C. Frémont was charged with carrying out formal investigation and survey of the American West. He set out in May, launching the first of three expeditions he would eventually lead west. He understood that his mission was not just a scientific one—it was also to facilitate American expansion and emigration.<sup>84</sup> Frémont succeeded in these goals, mapping the central overland route and providing detailed information of use to travelers. He also helped to unravel the myth of a Great American Desert west of the Mississippi.<sup>85</sup>

### Travel on the Great Platte River Road

The fur trade in the Rocky Mountains helped establish the Platte River as a key overland travel corridor. In 1830, fur traders Jedediah Smith, William Sublette, and David Jackson took the first caravan of wagons along the Platte River and South Pass, demonstrating the feasibility of wagon travel over this route. Marcus Whitman and Samuel Parker traveled the Platte River route in 1835, responding to a request of the Nez Perce Indians for missionaries. Women—the wives of missionaries—traveled successfully to Oregon in 1836 and 1838, generating optimism that families could make the trip. In 1840, the first emigrant family traveled the Platte River route, and the first emigrant company composed primarily of families headed to Oregon in 1842.<sup>86</sup> Frémont's reports of his expeditions provided information and maps that made the journey seem more feasible.<sup>87</sup>

In the 1840s and 1850s, most emigrants on the Platte River route set their sights on one of three destinations: the Oregon Country, the Great Salt Lake Valley, or California. Each of these places offered particular opportunities. The Oregon Country, which encompassed present-day Oregon and Washington, promised inexpensive farmland and a moderate climate. Brigham Young picked the Salt Lake Valley as a refuge for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, or LDS Church, also known as Mormons) because of its isolation and the natural barriers that made it defensible. Initial migrants to Deseret, as the Mormons named their new colony, sought escape from persecution, while later arrivals answered the call to build the towns and farms necessary for Deseret's survival. The hope of easy wealth from gold mining drew the early, primarily male, travelers to California. Other opportunities, such as commerce and agriculture, sustained the flow of emigrants after the gold rush faded.

Most emigrants traveled along the Platte River and over South Pass. Historian Merrill Mattes employed the term "Great Platte River Road" to refer to the system of trails along both sides of the Platte River.<sup>88</sup> Emigrants (apart from the

<sup>81</sup> Donald Brand compiled various accounts of Scott's death in his 1934 history of Scotts Bluff. See Donald D. Brand, "The History of Scotts Bluff Nebraska" (National Park Service Field Division of Education, 1934), 18-23.

<sup>82</sup> Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 1.

<sup>83</sup> A document titled "Recommended Nomenclature for Scotts Bluff National Monument," which appears to be from the 1940s, advised using the name "Scotts Bluff" to refer to the main feature of the monument only. It recommended that the feature across the highway to the south be designated "South Bluff," a name that the National Park Service had used informally. The document explained that South Bluff was a "separate and distinct geographical feature" that stood forty-three feet taller than Scotts Bluff. See Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 26; "Recommended Nomenclature for Scotts Bluff National Monument to Be Submitted to the U.S. Board of Geographical Names," n.d., 1, File: SCBL-2, List of Classified Structures/Cultural Landscapes Inventory, Cultural Resources, National Park Service-Midwest Regional Office, Omaha, Nebraska.

<sup>84</sup> Schubert, *Vanguard of Expansion*, 20.

<sup>85</sup> Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire*, 242-244.

<sup>86</sup> John Mack Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 6; Merrill J. Mattes, *Platte River Road Narratives: A Descriptive Bibliography of Travel Over the Great Central Overland Route to Oregon, California, Utah, Colorado, Montana, and Other Western States and Territories, 1812-1866* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 1.

<sup>87</sup> Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail*, 6-7.

<sup>88</sup> Merrill J. Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road: The Covered Wagon Mainline Via Fort Kearny to Fort Laramie* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987 [1969]), 7.

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Mormons, see below) generally organized into parties at "jumping-off points" along the Missouri River. Mattes found that rigid organization was not always a virtue, and "over-organized" companies usually broke into smaller, less formal parties partway into the journey.<sup>89</sup> Ideally, emigrants began traveling around April 15 with the goal of reaching Oregon or California by September 1, ahead of dangerous weather in the mountains. They generally moved 15-20 miles per day east of Fort Laramie, but their pace slowed west of that point due to the more challenging terrain.<sup>90</sup>

The initial wave of Mormon emigration to the Great Salt Lake Valley was a highly coordinated effort that took place from 1846 to 1847, with a winter stop near present-day Omaha, Nebraska. Mormon migration continued in subsequent years, with aid and encouragement from the LDS Church.<sup>91</sup> A grave a few miles east of present-day Scottsbluff holds the remains of Rebecca Winters, a Mormon emigrant who died of cholera on the trail in 1852; a granite bench memorializing Winters is within the monument boundary.<sup>92</sup> In 1855, church president Brigham Young began promoting emigration by handcart as an inexpensive migration strategy. From 1856-1860, a total of 2,962 people in ten organized companies participated in the handcart migration. In 1860, the church developed a different emigration strategy, sending wagons and supplies from Utah to transport emigrants from the Missouri River. The new method worked successfully in the 1860s, until it was supplanted by rail travel.<sup>93</sup>

### Scotts Bluff as Landmark and Obstacle

Overland travelers encountered a series of rock formations as they entered the high plains, starting with Court House Rock. In a study of one hundred emigrant journals and guidebooks, Mattes tabulated references to eight principal landmarks on the North Platte: Ash Hollow, Court House Rock, Chimney Rock, Scotts Bluff, Laramie Peak, Independence Rock, Devil's Gate, and South Pass. He found that Chimney Rock ranked first (mentioned in 97 percent of the sources), while Scotts Bluff was second (77 percent).<sup>94</sup> Travelers on both sides of the Platte remarked on Scotts Bluff.<sup>95</sup>

Scotts Bluff, like the other major rock formations, helped overland travelers measure their progress on the journey and provided a sense of achievement. Emigrants remarked on Scotts Bluff's size and beauty, comparing it to an ancient temple or castle:

The spectacle was grand and imposing beyond description. It seemed as if Nature, in mere sportiveness, had thought to excel the noblest works of art, and rear up a mimic city as the grand metropolis of her empire. (Rufus Sage, 1841)

That immense and celebrated pile . . . advances across the plain nearly to the water's edge. If one could increase the size of the Alhambra of Grenada, or the Castle of Heidelberg . . . he could form some idea of the magnitude and splendor of this *chef d'oeuvre* of Nature at Palace-Building . . . (J. Henry Carleton, 1895)

Looming afar over river and plain was "Scott's Bluff," a Nebraska Gibraltar; surmounted by a colossal fortress and a royal castle, it jutted on the water . . . (Philip St. George Cook, 1845)

This Scotts Bluff is grand beyond description. . . . It looks exactly like a splendid old Fort in thorough order, equipped and manned & ready for service, at a moment's notice. (Mrs. Vodges, 1868)<sup>96</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, 33-35.

<sup>90</sup> Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, 53-54.

<sup>91</sup> LeRoy Hafen and Ann Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, (Glendale, CA: A. H. Clark Company, 1960), 21-23.

<sup>92</sup> Aubrey L. Haines, *Historic Sites Along the Oregon Trail* (Gerald, MO: Patrice Press, 1981), 96. Haines commented, "This is one of the best-maintained graves of the emigration period, and is of particular interest because of the story that the CB&Q railroad shifted its location to avoid disturbing this grave" (97). Note that the grave itself is outside the boundaries of Scotts Bluff National Monument and is therefore not included in the contributing/noncontributing resource count. The bench memorializing Rebecca Winters is considered a "sign and memorial," which are, in general, not included in the resource count (the exception being the 1912 granite marker; for more information see Section 7).

<sup>93</sup> Hafen and Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, 24, 46, 56, 191-193.

<sup>94</sup> Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, 380.

<sup>95</sup> Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, 425.

<sup>96</sup> All quotations from Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, 423, 425.

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The bluff evoked a sense of the sublime in many travelers, as the quotations indicate. While they did not explicitly articulate it in their journals and diaries, emigrants likely read divine purpose into the landscape of Scotts Bluff and associated this with their journey. Culturally, therefore, Scotts Bluff represented something more than a literal milestone on the trail. It also signified the scale of emigrants' emotional and physical undertaking.

The chain of rock formations marked the change in terrain between the plains to the east and the mountains to the west. Scotts Bluff also marked a spring that was a source of water for travelers. Francis Parkman recorded that he camped "by the well-known spring on Scott's Bluff" on his 1846 journey.<sup>97</sup> Historian Merrill Mattes characterized Scotts Bluff as one of the best campsites available for its water and wood, but heavy use took its toll on the timber resources there.<sup>98</sup>

The trail on the south side of the Platte veered away from the river at Scotts Bluff, where badlands blocked travel closer to the water. Until 1850, emigrants primarily used a pass about eight miles south of Scotts Bluff to get around this section (Robidoux Pass).<sup>99</sup> An "A. Robidoux" established a trading post and blacksmith shop below the summit that travelers started noting in their journals in 1849. He built a new post in 1850 or 1851 in Carter Canyon, which may have focused on the Indian trade. The post at the pass remained in use until 1851.<sup>100</sup>

Another, more rugged pass lay closer to the river, skirting the southern and western edges of Scotts Bluff. This pass appears in some accounts as Scotts Bluff Pass, but it later became known as Mitchell Pass. Travelers initially preferred the easier grade of Robidoux Pass, and the presence of Robidoux's post made it even more attractive. According to Mattes, "it is suspected that the U.S. Army Quartermaster from Fort Laramie was the first to take wagons through Mitchell Pass, possibly doing a little engineering to widen the passage and ease the grade."<sup>101</sup> Starting in 1850, emigrants began using Mitchell Pass more regularly, and in 1852, it drew more traffic than Robidoux Pass. Mitchell Pass predominated from then on, later becoming the route of the overland stage, Pony Express, and transcontinental telegraph as well.<sup>102</sup> Mattes determined that emigrants believed the Mitchell Pass route was shorter than the Robidoux Pass route.<sup>103</sup>

**Overland Mail and the Pony Express**

The first overland mail service to the far West began in 1850. Prior to that point, mail had traveled from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific coast by boat, with a short land crossing at Panama. Mormon settlement of the interior West created a demand for mail service that could not be met by boat. The overland mail traveled along the Oregon Trail via South Pass, carried by private contractors but funded with federal dollars. Service was somewhat erratic during the 1850s.<sup>104</sup> The B.Y. Express and Carrying Company, organized by the LDS Church, obtained a mail contract for monthly service to Utah in October 1856. The company proceeded to build stations, at which they planted crops, along the route. The contract was cancelled in June 1857, which historians LeRoy and Ann Hafen attributed to anti-Mormonism.<sup>105</sup>

The Central Overland California and Pike's Peak Express Company, a business created by Russell, Majors, and Waddell, obtained the Salt Lake City mail contract in 1860. The postmaster general had cut Salt Lake City and California mail service via this route from weekly to semimonthly in 1859, while he kept weekly service on a more southerly route, for which John Butterfield held the contract. Russell, Majors, and Waddell launched the Pony Express as a private mail service on the central route, to compete better with Butterfield's southern route.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Quoted in Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 20.

<sup>98</sup> Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 24.

<sup>99</sup> Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 26; Merrill J. Mattes, "Robidoux's Trading Post at 'Scott's Bluffs,' and the California Gold Rush," *Nebraska History* 30, 2 (June 1949): 95-138.

<sup>100</sup> Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, 438-439, 442-444.

<sup>101</sup> Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 28.

<sup>102</sup> Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 28-29, 32.

<sup>103</sup> Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, 444.

<sup>104</sup> LeRoy R. Hafen, *The Overland Mail, 1849-1869: Promoter of Settlement, Precursor of Railroads* (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1926), 38, 56-57, 59.

<sup>105</sup> Hafen and Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, 150-151.

<sup>106</sup> Hafen, *The Overland Mail*, 134-135, 156-157, 159, 169.

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The Pony Express traveled along the North Platte River and through Mitchell Pass. It began in April 1860 and lasted eighteen months. Stations were located at approximately 15-mile intervals.<sup>107</sup> Ficklin's Springs, the nearest station to the east of Scotts Bluff, sat one mile west of Melbeta. Scotts Bluff Station, the nearest one to the west, was approximately 2.5 miles northwest of Mitchell Pass, near where Fort Mitchell was later built.<sup>108</sup> Riders carried mail for 75 to 100 miles each way on the stretch of route they covered, riding it twice a week. During winter, the Pony Express had some difficulty meeting its schedule, which had already been lengthened as an adjustment to the weather. When the transcontinental telegraph was completed in 1861 along the same route, the Pony Express folded. Although the Pony Express did not make money, it established the primacy of the central route for overland mail.<sup>109</sup>

**Freighting and William Henry Jackson**

The Great Platte River Road also served as a freighting route, and William Henry Jackson provided a glimpse of that phase of the trail's history in his 1866-1867 diary. Jackson was born in Keesville, New York, on April 4, 1843. He became a photographer in 1858, and in 1860, he moved to Rutland, Vermont, to work as a photographer's helper. He served with the 12<sup>th</sup> Vermont Volunteers during the Civil War, and after the war worked in Burlington, Vermont. The breakup of a relationship with Caroline Eastman, whom he had hoped to marry, prompted him to leave Vermont in 1866. He and a friend set out for the West in search of work. Jackson found a job as a "bullwhacker" with a freighting outfit; that is, he drove two wagons hitched together and drawn by six pairs of oxen. He only made one westbound journey in this job, but it took him past Scotts Bluff, where he camped just east of Mitchell Pass. He sketched scenes along the trail, which he used as the basis for a series of watercolors many years later.<sup>110</sup>

After Jackson returned from travels around the West in 1866-1867, he and two brothers established a photography studio in Omaha. Ferdinand Hayden hired Jackson as a photographer for an 1870 surveying expedition to Yellowstone, and Jackson continued to work with the Hayden survey until 1878. He later worked as a photographer for railroad companies and traveled with a commission to investigate railroad systems around the world.<sup>111</sup>

Jackson became involved with Scotts Bluff National Monument as a historic site toward the end of his life, an extension of his work with the Oregon Trail Memorial Association (OTMA). He died in 1942 at the age of 99. Jackson left a collection of his artwork to his friend Howard R. Driggs. Driggs, in turn, gave the collection to the Oregon Trail Museum at the monument, for which the museum created the Jackson Memorial Wing with funding from Julius F. Stone.<sup>112</sup>

**The Railroad and the End of the Oregon Trail**

Interest in spanning the continent with a railroad dates back to the 1840s. As rail construction was in the national interest but was hugely expensive, Congress began making grants of public land to railroad companies in 1850. The companies could sell the granted land to finance construction.<sup>113</sup> In 1853, Congress determined to support construction of one transcontinental rail line, but it did not select a route. Sectional, regional, and local interests advocated for different routes and termini, and Congress decided to fund multiple surveys in the hope of finding an ideal route. Four surveys were conducted along the 47<sup>th</sup> to 49<sup>th</sup>, the 38<sup>th</sup>, the 35<sup>th</sup>, and the 32<sup>nd</sup> parallels. In addition, other surveys explored the mountain passes in Oregon and California.<sup>114</sup> In 1862, the all-Union Congress approved a central route for a transcontinental railroad from Omaha to Sacramento, and construction began from both ends into the interior. The route ran along the

<sup>107</sup> Hafen, *The Overland Mail*, 179.

<sup>108</sup> Merrill J. Mattes and Paul Henderson, *The Pony Express: From St. Joseph to Fort Laramie* (St. Louis, MO: The Patrice Press, 1989), 1, 63-67.

<sup>109</sup> Hafen, *The Overland Mail*, 176, 185, 187, 190.

<sup>110</sup> LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, eds., *The Diaries of William Henry Jackson, Frontier Photographer* (Glendale, CA: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1959), 12-13, 34, 61; Dan L. Thrapp, *Encyclopedia of Frontier Biography*, vol. II (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1991 [1988]), 718.

<sup>111</sup> Hafen and Hafen, *The Diaries of William Henry Jackson*, 13-17; Thrapp, *Encyclopedia of Frontier Biography*, 2: 718.

<sup>112</sup> Dean Knudsen, *An Eye for History: The Paintings of William Henry Jackson*, [http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/knudsen/foreword.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/knudsen/foreword.htm); Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 41-42; Gerald Sheratt Library, Howard R. Driggs Biography, <http://www.li.suu.edu/page/special-digital-collections-howard-r-driggs-collection-biography>.

<sup>113</sup> Howard R. Lamar, ed. *The New Encyclopedia of the American West* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 936-37.

<sup>114</sup> Schubert, *Vanguard of Expansion*, 95-97.

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Platte River to the fork then followed the South Platte a short distance. From there, it took a westward course, passing well south of Scotts Bluff. The east-bound and west-bound tracks were joined at Promontory Point, Utah, on May 10, 1869, a date that Mattes said "can be accepted as marking the end of the historic Oregon-California Trail."<sup>115</sup>

Mattes estimated that nearly 500,000 people traveled along the Great Platte River Road between 1841 and 1866. The yearly numbers varied widely, with a high point of perhaps 65,000 in 1850.<sup>116</sup> He determined that more than one-third of emigrants traveled on the north side of the Platte, contrary to longstanding belief that only the Mormons used that side. And some Mormons used the south side of the river "because of big, unsympathetic non-Mormon crowds at the Council Bluffs jumping-off area and also because of the military protection afforded by Forts Kearny and Laramie."<sup>117</sup>

### Indian-Emigrant Relations

Indians and overland travelers interacted with each other in myriad ways. Mutual misunderstandings and stereotypes sometimes led to conflict and even violence. But Indians and emigrants also collaborated through trade and by providing assistance to one another. Historian Michael Tate argues that "[p]atterns of cooperation, mutually beneficial trade, and acts of personal kindness clearly outnumbered the cases of contentiousness and bloodshed in the two decades before the Civil War." He also notes, "Anxieties, ambiguities, and distrust clearly produced more problems between American Indians and whites than did acts of innate barbarism or premeditated malice."<sup>118</sup>

Euroamerican emigrants often held negative perceptions of Indians, fueled by images in art, literature, newspapers, guidebooks, and other travelers' accounts.<sup>119</sup> Overland travel was full potential hazards, but Tate found that "no danger loomed larger in the minds of emigrants than the fear of torture or death at the hands of murderous Indians."<sup>120</sup> While Indians do not seem to have had overblown fears of emigrants, they similarly viewed Euroamericans through their particular cultural lenses and could not always make sense of travelers' behavior. For example, Indians expected to exchange gifts as a prelude to other interactions. When Euroamericans failed to comply, Indians formed negative impressions of them.

Trade between Indians and emigrants served both groups' needs. Plains Indians exchanged fresh or preserved game with travelers for bread and flour. They also sought tobacco and processed foods, such as sugar and coffee. Guide books and other sources suggested that emigrants bring cloth, beads, and finished clothing to trade with Indians. In return, Indians offered moccasins and bison robes that provided better protection from the elements than the travelers' clothes. Emigrants found that Indians were interested in colorful textiles, jewelry, and unusual items (such as an umbrella). Indians also traded for money, which they could use to buy desired food or manufactured items from trading posts.<sup>121</sup>

In addition acting as paid guides, Indians helped some travelers by providing information about the trails, where to find grass, and where to camp. Tate explains that Indians living along the trail had incentives to preserve good relationships. They relied on overland traffic to help sustain their economies. They also sought to minimize friction with travelers that might lead to violent backlash against themselves.<sup>122</sup>

Overland travelers also gave aid to Indians, but Tate says this generally occurred "only after the whites got to know their Indian counterparts personally."<sup>123</sup> As passers-through, emigrants did not have the same incentive to foster good relationships with Indians. They did, however, seek to avoid conflict and to benefit from the trade and aid Indians offered.

<sup>115</sup> Mattes, *Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 46.

<sup>116</sup> Mattes, *Platte River Road Narratives*, 2-5.

<sup>117</sup> Merrill J. Mattes, "The Northern Route of the Non-Mormons: Rediscovery of Nebraska's Forgotten Historic Trail," *Overland Journal* 8, 2 (1990): 7, 10.

<sup>118</sup> Michael L. Tate, *Indians and Emigrants: Encounters on the Overland Trails* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), x.

<sup>119</sup> Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*, 4-9, 13, 19.

<sup>120</sup> Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*, 3-4.

<sup>121</sup> Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*, 42-51.

<sup>122</sup> Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*, 105.

<sup>123</sup> Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*, 111.

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An initial "spirit of cooperation" on the trails eroded over time. Indians suffered the effects of epidemic diseases, causing them to move away from the trail route and to become more wary of contact with Euroamericans.<sup>124</sup> As game, timber, and grasses became more scarce along the trail, tensions between Indians and emigrants grew, leading to a series of military conflicts.

In May 1846, Congress authorized the establishment of military stations along the Oregon Trail. It approved up to \$3,000 per station "to defray expenses," plus up to \$2,000 per station to compensate "the Indian tribes which may own or possess the ground on which the said station may be erected . . . ."<sup>125</sup>

Thomas Fitzpatrick, who became Indian agent for the Upper Platte and Arkansas Agency in 1846, sought to hold "big talks" with Indians in his district. He held one at Horse Creek near Fort Laramie in 1851. Attendees included Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Crow, Gros Ventre, Assiniboine, Arikara, and Shoshone Indians, about 10,000 in total—the biggest treaty council ever held.<sup>126</sup> The allied Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho made up most of that number, however, having successfully driven off or intimidated the other tribes so that their presence was small.<sup>127</sup>

The resulting Treaty of Fort Laramie sought to keep the Platte River corridor free of conflict. It specified territorial boundaries for the various tribes and provided for peaceful relations, both among tribes and between the U.S. and the Indians. Within a few years, however, the peace unraveled. Conflicts between Indians and Euroamericans erupted in the 1850s and again in the 1860s, ultimately leading to the removal of the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho Indians from the Platte River region.

By the late 1840s, the Pawnee were weakened by conflict with the Sioux, epidemic diseases, and lack of food. They ceded land to the United States in 1848 and again in 1857, leaving only a small reservation on the Loup River.<sup>128</sup> In the 1870s, the Pawnee were still suffering losses to the Sioux in the western hunting grounds south of the Platte, and they experienced new pressures from Euroamerican settlers who took control of resources adjacent to the reservation and sought the tribe's removal from Nebraska. The Pawnee felt they had little choice but to cede the reservation and move to Indian Territory.<sup>129</sup>

### Settlement of Gering and Scottsbluff

Following completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, the Oregon Trail continued to be used by the military traveling between Forts Kearny and Laramie. Additionally, proximity to the railroad, located fifty miles south of Scotts Bluff, and the wealth of open prairie land and river access, encouraged ranchers to settle the North Platte Valley in the 1870s. The region became central to the open-range cattle industry in the late 1870s and early 1880s, and year-round homesteaders began arriving in 1885. Gering was platted in 1888 and Scottsbluff was founded in 1900.<sup>130</sup> Following the turn of the century, sugar beets, beans, potatoes, alfalfa, corn, and other crops were grown in farmlands irrigated by reclamation projects (begun ca. 1900). The Gering Canal, constructed ca. 1909 with a right-of-way thought to date to ca. 1900, and the Fort Laramie-Gering Canal, under construction in 1918 by the North Platte Reclamation Project, are two examples of irrigation projects that helped spur agricultural growth in the region, both of which are located within monument boundaries and were established prior to proclamation of the monument.<sup>131</sup>

Railroads played a significant part in the economic and agricultural success of the North Platte Valley in the early 1900s. Freight trains carried agricultural goods such as the valley's tremendous sugar beet crop to larger markets, while passenger rail transported people to and from the valley. Although the Union Pacific Railroad had completed surveys of the territory south of the North Platte River well before the turn of the century, the first line to physically enter the valley was the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad in 1900, along the north shore. The Burlington line resulted in the

<sup>124</sup> Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*, 135-136.

<sup>125</sup> Act of May 19, 1846, 9 Stat. 13.

<sup>126</sup> Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1846-1890*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 60-61.

<sup>127</sup> White, "The Winning of the West," 340-341.

<sup>128</sup> Wishart, *An Unspeakable Sadness*, 65, 102.

<sup>129</sup> Wishart, *An Unspeakable Sadness*, 188-198.

<sup>130</sup> Barber, "Scotts Bluff Summit Road, HAER No. NE-11," 9.

<sup>131</sup> Barber, "Scotts Bluff Summit Road, HAER No. NE-11," 10.

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formation of towns along northern rim of the river and served to promote the growth of these towns at a more rapid pace than their counterparts to the south. While Burlington managers had hoped that their line would sufficiently service the territory and entice the population from the other side of the river to move north, they were mistaken in their anticipation.<sup>132</sup>

The residents of towns such as Gering on the south side of the North Platte River knew of the Burlington line crossing to the north, but they held firm on the south bank waiting for the Union Pacific to arrive. In 1907, construction began on the Union Pacific line. Four years later, on October 8, 1911, the first train entered Gering, bringing to fruition the expectations of businessmen who had waited over twenty years for the trains to appear.<sup>133</sup>

Prior to the condemnation of the lands for a national monument, the area around Scotts Bluff was claimed by settlers under both the Scrip Warrant Act (10 Stat. 701) and the Homestead Act (32 Stat. 388). Proving homesteads and awarding land patents continued into the 1930s on land now included in the monument.<sup>134</sup> While no land claims exist for the bluffs themselves, the Bracken family is known to have had a horse ranch at the base of the bluff near Scotts Spring.<sup>135</sup> Historic photos dated ca. 1921 depict at least four buildings, including three bank-barn-style outbuildings, as well as a wood-fenced corral.

According to census records, Walter W. Bracken was born to Thomas W. and Elizabeth Bracken in Dawson, Illinois, around 1866. In 1888, Walter married wife Lula C., also born in Illinois around 1868. By 1900, Walter was employed as a carpenter and the family was living in Gering and growing quickly: sons Elmer R., Thomas W., Louis D., Frank E., Charles E., Harold L., and daughter Mamie E., were born between 1889 and 1905. The Bracken family is thought to have maintained their horse farm at the base of Scotts Bluff through ca. 1923. Lula, along with daughter Mamie, relocated to Burbank, California, by 1930, likely following Walter's death.

No other settlers are known to have established homes or other improvements on what are now monument lands, although one golf course existed prior to creation of the monument. The Scotts Bluff Country Club, established in 1915, was historically located on forty-two acres in the northeast quadrant of the monument at the base of Scotts Bluff.<sup>136</sup> The original clubhouse was a two-story, bank-barn style building with a side-gable roof and wraparound porch. The clubhouse burned ca. 1950 and was replaced with a modern building in an industrial Ranch style. At the time the NPS acquired the lands in 1972, the Scotts Bluff Country Club included no fewer than three buildings, including the clubhouse, as well as roads and parking areas and the golf course itself.<sup>137</sup> In 1995, the Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund provided funds to "restore the land by removing the clubhouse basement, the caretaker's house basement, and a swimming pool. After these structures were removed the [monument] staff recontoured the ground, treated the nonnative plants with herbicide, and seeded the area with native flora."<sup>138</sup> Little if any physical evidence of the Scotts Bluff Country Club remains on monument land today.

<sup>132</sup> Gering Centennial Committee, *Gering, Nebraska: The First 100 Years* (Dallas: Curtis Media Corporation, 1989), 24; North Platte Valley Museum, *Images of America: Gering, Scottsbluff, and Terrytown* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2009), 8; U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey, Reconnaissance Survey Final Report of Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska*, July 1995, 26.

<sup>133</sup> North Platte Valley Museum, *Images of America*, 32.

<sup>134</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office Records, <http://www.glorecords.blm.gov/search/default.aspx#searchTabIndex=0&searchByTypeIndex=0>. See Patent Number 1085473, granted to James H. Bradley, August 28, 1936, Township 22N, Range 55W, Section 32, 8 acres; Patent Number 1055447, granted to Herman G. Helzer, June 1, 1932, Township 22N, Range 55W, Section 29, SE¼SW¼; Patent Number 1056039, granted to Darrell D. Randall, July 20, 1932, Township 22N, Range 55W, Section 29, 40 acres.

<sup>135</sup> "Bracken Horse Ranch," ca. 1921, File: Historical, Homesteads, Drawer 1, Administrative History Photographs, Vault, Scotts Bluff National Monument, Gering, Nebraska [Vault-SCBL].

<sup>136</sup> National Parks Conservation Association, *State of the Parks: Scotts Bluff National Monument, A Resource Assessment*, July 2009, 7, [http://www.npca.org/stateoftheparks/scotts\\_bluff/SCBL-report.pdf](http://www.npca.org/stateoftheparks/scotts_bluff/SCBL-report.pdf).

<sup>137</sup> Scotts Bluff Country Club, n.d., File: Scotts Bluff Country Club, Photograph Files, North Platte Valley Museum, Gering, Nebraska.

<sup>138</sup> National Parks Conservation Association, *State of the Parks: Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 7, [http://www.npca.org/stateoftheparks/scotts\\_bluff/SCBL-report.pdf](http://www.npca.org/stateoftheparks/scotts_bluff/SCBL-report.pdf).

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A second golf course, the Gering Golf Course, was located at the base of Dome Rock and was established in 1927. The Gering Golf Course, a public facility, benefited from being located on monument lands during the period of CCC construction (1933-1939, discussed below); in 1935, the NPS and CCC added an adobe-brick shelter house, pit toilets, and bridgework. The Gering Golf course operated until December 31, 1950, when the NPS opted not to renew the city of Gering's permit to operate the facility. At the time the facility was closed, the shelter house and other features were in rapidly deteriorating condition. Buildings and structures related to the Gering Golf Course were obliterated on June 15, 1951.<sup>139</sup>

Also located near South Bluff was a rifle range, which operated from 1925 through 1951. The rifle range included simple wood structures placed against natural earthen barriers and was used by the local National Guard and the Scottsbluff Prisoner of War camp during the latter part of World War II.<sup>140</sup> Like the Gering Golf Course, the rifle range appears to have closed due to changing opinions about how national parks should be managed, specifically in regard to preserving "natural" spaces.

These changing opinions appear to have been primarily influenced by Thomas Vint, who served as the chief landscape architect for the NPS in 1927; Vint continued to work for NPS in landscape architecture through his retirement in the 1960s.<sup>141</sup> As early as 1932, Vint expressed concerns regarding the visual impact of both the Gering Golf Course and the Zig Zag Trail (discussed below) and held the opinion that "if Scotts Bluff National Monument is to progress as a national monument, the Gering Golf Course is bound to become an objection."<sup>142</sup> The policy of obliterating all but essential buildings and structures, and allowing the remainder of monument lands to remain undeveloped, arguably began with Vint and continues to the present day.

## Establishment and Development of Scotts Bluff National Monument

At the turn of the twentieth century, the United States was experiencing a "continued clamor for protection of archaeological sites."<sup>143</sup> The significance of the Oregon Trail and the role the route played in western migration was an important historical theme, especially in Nebraska. The Oregon Trail Memorial Commission, organized in the early 1900s, worked in cooperation with the Nebraska Memorial Association (NMA), Oregon Trail Memorial Association, Nebraska State Historical Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, and other organizations to preserve and commemorate historic sites and events in Nebraska.<sup>144</sup>

In 1912, the NMA commissioned a series of granite markers along the Oregon Trail and at various historic sites. On October 18, 1912, the verbiage for the Mitchell Pass marker was given to Kimball Brothers of Lincoln, Nebraska, for inscribing.<sup>145</sup> Although the marker itself is dated 1912, it appears that the marker was not officially set until 1913. The 1912 marker placed at the base of Scotts Bluff along Mitchell Pass was the first formal, permanent acknowledgment of the importance of the Oregon Trail in what would soon become a national monument.

Congress passed the American Antiquities Act in 1906 (34 Stat. 225), authorizing the president of the United States to declare and reserve historic landmarks and "other objects of historic or scientific interest" on federal land as national monuments.<sup>146</sup> In 1914, the first formal suggestion to create such a monument at Scotts Bluff came from Senator G. M.

<sup>139</sup> "Raising of Shelter House," June 15, 1951, File: Gering Golf Course, Drawer 1, Administrative History Photographs, Vault-SCBL.

<sup>140</sup> Steve Osborne, comp., "Scotts Bluff National Monument Timeline," National Park Service internal document, 2009, available at Scotts Bluff National Monument, Gering, Nebraska.

<sup>141</sup> Mary Shivers Culpin, "Thomas Vint," in *National Park Service: The First 75 Years*, [http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/sontag/vint.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/sontag/vint.htm).

<sup>142</sup> Barber, "Scotts Bluff Summit Road, HAER No. NE-11," 15.

<sup>143</sup> Lary M. Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System: The Critical Documents* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1994), [http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online\\_books/anps/anps\\_1.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/anps/anps_1.htm).

<sup>144</sup> Nebraska State Historical Society, finding aid for Collection RG3908.AM: Nebraska Memorial Association (Neb.), <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/research/manuscripts/organize/nebraska-memorial.htm>; Folders 1 and 2, Series 5, RG2347.AM: Oregon Trail Memorial Commission (Neb.), Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebraska.

<sup>145</sup> Folders 1 and 2, Series 5, RG2347.AM: Oregon Trail Memorial Commission (Neb.), Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebraska.

<sup>146</sup> Act of June 8, 1906 (American Antiquities Act), 34 Stat. 225.

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Hitchcock, who explained that the mayor of Scottsbluff supported the idea. Congressman Moses P. Kinkaid made a similar proposition in early 1916.<sup>147</sup>

The number of national parks and monuments began to grow following the creation of the National Park Service later in 1916. Supporters of a national park or monument at Scotts Bluff stepped up their efforts. Local leaders in Gering and Scottsbluff petitioned NPS Director Stephen Mather in 1918, and Secretary of the Interior Franklin Lane subsequently requested an investigation into the feasibility of a national park or monument.<sup>148</sup> Alicia Barber noted that "coordinated local efforts, not federal initiative," led to the more serious consideration of Scotts Bluff for designation as an NPS unit.<sup>149</sup> Although some within the Department of the Interior questioned Scotts Bluff's significance, Mather favored its protection as a national monument for its association with the Oregon Trail and its potential for tourist development. Local support remained strong.<sup>150</sup>

President Woodrow Wilson created Scotts Bluff National Monument by Proclamation 1547 on December 12, 1919.<sup>151</sup> Although he declared Scotts Bluff to be "the highest known point within the State of Nebraska," this was an error.<sup>152</sup> But the proclamation provided additional justifications:

Whereas Mitchell Pass, lying to the south of said bluff, was traversed by the Old Oregon Trail and said bluff was used as a landmark and rendezvous by thousands of immigrants and frontiersmen travelling said trail enroute for new homes in the Northwest; and

Whereas, in view of these facts, as well as of the scientific interest the region possesses from a geological standpoint, it appears that the public interests will be promoted by reserving the lands upon which said bluff and the said pass are located as a national monument . . . .<sup>153</sup>

The original boundaries of the monument encompassed 2,053.83 acres. In 1924, President Calvin Coolidge removed 160 acres from the monument. In 1932, Herbert Hoover added nearly 1,900 acres, consisting of "certain adjoining lands for administrative purposes and the protection of a certain approach highway and additional features of scientific interest . . . ." Franklin Delano Roosevelt added a little over 53 acres in 1940, including public lands adjacent to the monument and islands in the North Platte River. A resurvey of the boundaries in 1935 resulted in an increase of 182.90 acres to the monument's total. In 1944, the monument contained 3,476.27 acres, 1,184.12 acres of which were private inholdings.<sup>154</sup>

On April 10, 1920, the first custodian of Scotts Bluff National Monument, Willie Major Maupin, assumed his post. The former editor of the *Gering Midwest* newspaper, Maupin received an annual salary of twelve dollars and served until July 1924. In his first years as custodian, Maupin patrolled and, with the aid of a one-man staff for five days, prevented "marauders from cutting down trees in the Monument."<sup>155</sup> Maupin also recommended that a private corporation be established to construct a road to the summit of Scotts Bluff and a twenty-five cent admission be levied, but the suggestion was rejected as it went against NPS policies. In 1920, an estimated 2,500 people used "the old foot trail and

<sup>147</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 11-12.

<sup>148</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 12.

<sup>149</sup> Alicia Barber, "Local Places, National Spaces: Public Memory, Community Identity, and Landscape at Scotts Bluff National Monument," *American Studies* 45, 2 (Summer 2004): 40.

<sup>150</sup> Harris, *History of Scotts Bluff National Monument*, 13-14; Barber, "Local Places, National Spaces," 41.

<sup>151</sup> Proclamation 1547, December 12, 1919, 41 Stat. 1779.

<sup>152</sup> Cockrell, "Scotts Bluff National Monument: An Administrative History," URL

<sup>153</sup> Cockrell, "Scotts Bluff National Monument: An Administrative History,"

[http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/scbl/adhi/adhi1.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/scbl/adhi/adhi1.htm).

<sup>154</sup> Executive Order No. 4008, May 9, 1924; Proclamation 1999, June 1, 1932, 47 Stat. 2512; Proclamation Enlarging Scotts Bluff National Monument, March 29, 1940 54 Stat. 2690; Merrill J. Mattes, Custodian, to Superintendent, Rocky Mountain National Park, November 20, 1944, Dedication Program, August 8, 1949, File: "101 History—General (1 of 2)," Box 196, Scotts Bluff National Monument, National Parks and Monuments Central Classified Files, 1936-1952, Record Group 79: Records of the National Park Service, National Archives and Records Administration-Central Plains Region, Kansas City, Missouri.

<sup>155</sup> Osborne, "Scotts Bluff National Monument Timeline."

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the earlier constructed wooden ladder at the summit to climb the bluff, and another 5,000 picnicked on the east 'slopes' of the bluff between April 15<sup>th</sup> and October 5<sup>th</sup>.<sup>156</sup>

In 1921, federal funds and private donations were obtained to erect several picnic tables near the base of the original, slanting trail on the east face of Scotts Bluff. By 1927, this trail proved inadequate and Bert Burrell, a civil engineer from Yellowstone National Park, spent one month surveying and staking a new route up the bluff. Beginning at the picnic area on the east face, the Zig Zag Trail, also known as the Boy Scout trail, was constructed by cutting switchbacks into the bluff. By spring 1932, Vint advocated construction of a new trail at an alternate site; he recommend the Zig Zag Trail be obliterated, noting that the NPS would no longer build trails of this type (in other words, so invasive to the visual landscape).<sup>157</sup> The trail had etched into the side of the bluff so deeply that, even though it was only used through 1938, it is still clearly visible on the east side of Scotts Bluff.

In 1928, the towns of Gering and Scottsbluff "collaborated in funding the extension of a power line into monument grounds, enabling lights to be erected at the picnic area and at the summit."<sup>158</sup> On July 8, 1930, the Hiram Scott Memorial Arch and bronze plaque were placed at the foot of the Zig Zag Trail. The arch was erected by the Katahdin Chapter of the DAR and dedicated by William Henry Jackson—its ruins are still visible at the base of the trail. The plaque has since been relocated to the top of Scotts Bluff.

During the early days of the monument, permits were granted on NPS lands for the aforementioned Gering Golf Course (1927-1950) and Rifle Range (1925-1951), as well as for grazing. The first grazing permit was issued to "A.S. Bracken" for eighty-eight dollars, and covered the period from January 1 through December 31, 1921. Although census records do not indicate the identity of "A.S.," it is possible that the initials are an acronym for a business run by the Bracken family.

NPS Director Horace Albright spent three days at Scotts Bluff in 1931. At the end his visit, Albright verbally approved construction of a road to the bluff's summit on the condition "that it is feasible both from the standpoint of engineering and of preservation of the landscape features of the Bluff."<sup>159</sup> Ultimately, the west side of the bluff was chosen for the road because it was less steep, provided the opportunity to make the road less visible on the landscape, and was sufficiently removed from the actual location of Mitchell Pass to maintain the pass's historic integrity while affording the public views of the Oregon Trail.<sup>160</sup> Albright announced the NPS's intent to construct the summit road at the picnic area in 1932; 2,000 people were in attendance for the announcement.

The years 1933 to 1939 represent the peak era of development at the monument, mostly due to federal funding of New Deal programs that subsequently benefited the NPS. Following Albright's verbal approval for construction of a summit road in 1931, a general land survey revealed that development on the east slope (or at least the access road to and from the Zig Zag Trail and picnic area) was located on private land. Therefore, attention turned instead to the south side of Scotts Bluff, and the Civil Works Administration (CWA) was enlisted to begin construction. On November 24, 1933, Federal Project F68 allotted \$61,977 and 213 men from the Scotts Bluff County Reemployment office to begin rough grading for the "Pass-to-Summit" road. The project staff also included an engineer, a landscape architect, and a six-member historical archeological reconnaissance team headed by Professor Harold Cook, a geologist and paleontologist.<sup>161</sup>

Other work that year included blasting the pedestrian tunnel through Saddle Rock and engineering the foot trail, today known as the Saddle Rock Trail, eliminating the hazardous wood steps near the summit. Although a May 1932 article in the *Scottsbluff Republican* claimed that a museum was planned for the summit, from the beginning the NPS had intended to keep the summit relatively undeveloped. Only a small parking area was planned for the top of the bluff. As construction

<sup>156</sup> Gering Centennial Committee, *Gering, Nebraska: The First 100 Years*, 17.

<sup>157</sup> Barber, "Scotts Bluff Summit Road, HAER No. NE-11," 14-15.

<sup>158</sup> Alicia Barber, "Local Places, National Spaces: Public Memory, Community Identity, and Landscape at Scotts Bluff National Monument," *American Studies* 45, 2 (Summer 2004): 46.

<sup>159</sup> Barber, "Scotts Bluff Summit Road, HAER No. NE-11," 18.

<sup>160</sup> Barber, "Scotts Bluff Summit Road, HAER No. NE-11," 19.

<sup>161</sup> Barber, "Scotts Bluff Summit Road, HAER No. NE-11," 16.

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of the Summit Road continued, some workers were busy regrading and hauling dirt at the summit while others excavated Tunnel 1.<sup>162</sup>

Concern about the future of the Summit Road came in 1934, when the CWA was reduced in order to keep its programs within available funding allotments. Federal Project F68 had been funded only through February 15, 1934, at the expiration of which no additional federal monies were to be provided. Monument officials appealed for additional federal support, while Engineer David L. Froerer worked toward completing Tunnel 2 as quickly as possible. Park custodian Albert Mathers wrote to NPS officials to suggest obtaining additional money through the Public Works Administration (PWA). The PWA had been founded in June 1933 to fund projects "based on their value to national planning and their role in fulfilling comprehensive plans prepared in advance."<sup>163</sup> Effective March 31, 1934, the CWA was suspended nationwide, and its work divisions were reorganized under the Emergency Relief Administration (ERA). No federal funding was available for monument projects through 1934, and work halted with Tunnel 1 fully excavated, five hundred feet of completed road in place between Tunnels 1 and 2, and partial excavation of Tunnel 2. The total cost of the project at the end of the CWA effort was \$34,143.87.<sup>164</sup>

The Emergency Appropriation Act of 1935 provided a \$22,380 allotment for grading and excavation of the Summit Road and two remaining tunnels. Using Federal ERA (FERA, as opposed to state ERA) labor, work resumed on December 18, 1934. Despite numerous dirt slides, rockfalls, and cave-ins, FERA work at Scotts Bluff continued through June 1935, when it was discontinued due to the scarcity of relief labor.<sup>165</sup>

By this time, the CCC was also lending aid by hauling materials, bank sloping, and performing other low-skilled tasks. CCC Camp #NM-1, Company #762 (sometimes referred to as the ECW Camp) at Scotts Bluff was approved on February 7, 1935, and manned beginning on May 30, 1935. A tent camp was established on a rise south of the North Platte River for the first three months while barracks were constructed. Camp enrollees constructed the buildings by hand, and the camp was completed August 10, 1935.<sup>166</sup>

No permanent buildings were constructed at the monument until 1935, when the CCC began manufacturing thousands of adobe bricks to build the Oregon Trail Museum (designated simply as the Visitor Center by 1956). The first unit of the museum was completed on June 21, 1935, but it did not open to the public until July 16, 1936; permanent exhibits were completed by October 1936. At the time, the Oregon Trail Museum "was said to be the first museum in the country to focus on the history of the American west."<sup>167</sup>

The CCC continued to work on various projects at the monument, including restoration of Scotts Spring in 1936. The Summit Road opened to the public on September 19, 1937, and 550 cars ascended on its inaugural day.<sup>168</sup> However, construction on the tunnel portals continued, along with completion of other buildings at the monument. The Maintenance Shed was added in 1936, and a comfort station (restroom) was built the following year. In 1938-1939, the NPS added a two-bedroom Ranger's Residence, completed a major addition to the Visitor Center (the tower, Paleontology wing, and custodian's offices), and completed most of the existing trail system. Two rock masonry walls were built at the summit to provide visitors with observation points and overlooks.<sup>169</sup>

In addition, a new picnic area was opened west of South Bluff. The CCC provided labor for road construction and built picnic tables, rustic masonry fire pits, and pit toilets. The picnic area was, by all accounts, wildly popular - so much so that

<sup>162</sup> Barber, "Scotts Bluff Summit Road, HAER No. NE-11," 16-24.

<sup>163</sup> Barber, "Scotts Bluff Summit Road, HAER No. NE-11," 24.

<sup>164</sup> Barber, "Scotts Bluff Summit Road, HAER No. NE-11," 26.

<sup>165</sup> Barber, "Scotts Bluff Summit Road, HAER No. NE-11," 26-28.

<sup>166</sup> Barber, "Scotts Bluff Summit Road, HAER No. NE-11," 27.

<sup>167</sup> Barber, "Scotts Bluff Summit Road, HAER No. NE-11," 17.

<sup>168</sup> Barber, "Scotts Bluff Summit Road, HAER No. NE-11," 39.

<sup>169</sup> Administrative History Photographs, Vault-SCBL.

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it became impossible for park staff to adequately patrol and maintain it. To the dismay of locals, the NPS closed the picnic area on the South Bluff closed in the fall of 1939 due to environmental deterioration.<sup>170</sup>

On July 2, 1940, District Engineer Clifford Shoemaker completed a final inspection of the Summit Road. Aside from repairing joint expansions in October, this date marks the end of the first major building campaign undertaken at Scotts Bluff. Records from 1934 show approximately 10,000 visitors came to the monument. Visitation continued to grow through the 1930s, and in 1940 annual visitation reached 108,536.<sup>171</sup>

Beginning in 1939 and continuing through the 1950s, an annual Soap Box Derby drew thousands of spectators from the surrounding area. Other popular events included sunrise Easter services on the bluff, company and family picnics, and caravans for delegates from such organizations as the Nebraska Council of Women's Demonstration Project Clubs and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of Nebraska and Wyoming.<sup>172</sup> Though high visitation rates spoke to the monument's popularity, NPS staff viewed such events as the Soap Box Derby as "questionable use of monument property."<sup>173</sup> The thousands of cars that arrived for such events did serious environmental damage and left permanent scars on the landscape. In 1940, the Summit parking lot was nearly tripled in size in an attempt to "unsnarl large traffic jams" that had occurred on the Summit Road since it opened.<sup>174</sup>

Heavy use of the monument prompted the NPS to step up its protection of the delicate landscape. In 1940, the south picnic area was closed and its road, parking lot, and fire pits were obliterated. Although visitation rates dropped following America's entry in World War II in 1941, yearly averages continued to be between 30,000 and 50,000 persons a year or more. Following the end of the war, pressure rose for increased use of monument lands, including demands to reopen the South Bluff picnic grounds, attempts to erect a radio tower on the summit, and resumption of extensive use at the Rifle Range and Gering Golf Course. By 1950, the Rifle Range and Gering Golf Course were removed as part of the larger effort to preserve the monument's natural resources.<sup>175</sup>

Building projects in the 1940s were limited primarily to maintenance, repairs, and additions. In 1942, for example, a section of the adobe courtyard wall collapsed as a result of weather exposure. The wall was repaired, but further deterioration required the wholesale replacement of the adobe with stuccoed concrete masonry units (CMUs) or wood fencing by 1951. In 1948, the NPS added a third bedroom to the Ranger's Residence. Simultaneously, the Jackson Memorial Wing was added to the east side of the Visitors Center, completed and dedicated August 8, 1949. William Henry Jackson donated various photographs, newspaper articles, and other memorabilia, which were placed in a "time capsule" embedded in the building's southeast corner.

Other construction during the 1940s revolved around keeping Summit Road open and free of debris. Numerous rock falls and landslides had plagued construction of the road, and Scotts Bluff continued to erode rapidly. For example, in March 1949, 309.4 tons of rock collapsed onto the Summit Road, blocking vehicular access. Repairs to the road would continue into the next century, as sheer walls, tunnel shoring, and various other techniques were employed. The Summit Road continues to be the only vehicular access to the top of Scotts Bluff.

Following World War II, automobile tourism grew dramatically, and previously remote parks became easily accessible via inexpensive vehicular transportation. In an effort to capitalize on the increased visitor potential, and in conjunction with its upcoming fiftieth anniversary, the NPS initiated the "Mission 66" program. Mission 66 was a ten-year program launched in 1956 to improve parks across the country by providing new or updated roads, utilities, employee housing, and other

<sup>170</sup> News Item for Release Friday, September 15, 1939, File: 101 History-General (2 of 2), Box 196, Scotts Bluff National Monument, National Parks and Monuments Central Classified Files, 1936-1952, Record Group 79: Records of the National Park Service, National Archives and Records Administration-Central Plains Region, Kansas City, Missouri.

<sup>171</sup> Cockrell, Scotts Bluff National Monument, Nebraska: An Administrative History," Appendix F,

[http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/scbl/adhi/adhi1.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/scbl/adhi/adhi1.htm).

<sup>172</sup> Barber, "Scotts Bluff Summit Road, HAER No. NE-11," 46.

<sup>173</sup> Barber, "Scotts Bluff Summit Road, HAER No. NE-11," 46.

<sup>174</sup> Cockrell, Scotts Bluff National Monument, Nebraska: An Administrative History," Part I,

[http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/scbl/adhi/adhi1.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/scbl/adhi/adhi1.htm).

<sup>175</sup> Administrative History Photographs, Vault-SCBL.

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aspects of park infrastructure. During the Mission 66 program, the NPS spent more than one billion dollars as planners and architects attempted to "streamline and standardize visitor services at federal parks nationwide."<sup>176</sup>

At Scotts Bluff, Mission 66 activities occurred primarily in 1958 and included construction of a second residence for park staff (the Mission 66 Residence), expansion of the Maintenance Shed, and construction of a public amphitheater behind the Visitors Center, known as the Campfire Circle. While many parks around the country gained new ultramodern visitor centers and other structures, Scotts Bluff underwent a fairly modest construction program using a streamlined style compatible with the original CCC buildings. The costs of the Mission 66 initiative at Scotts Bluff totaled \$121,100.<sup>177</sup>

Scotts Bluff National Monument continues to be regarded an important natural and historic resource. Following passage of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, Scotts Bluff was placed on the NRHP for its archeological significance. Since then, structures from the CCC and Mission 66 eras of NPS development have become eligible for inclusion to the NRHP, creating the need to update the monument's listing.

With the exception of paving the trails (1951) and removing nonessential buildings from monument lands (including but not limited to a pump house and oil house once located near the Visitor Center complex, a Quonset hut, and resources related to the Gering Golf Course, Rifle Range, and Scotts Bluff Country Club), the monument is almost exactly as it was following the Mission 66 campaign. In the 1970s, the interior of the Visitor's Center was substantially altered with drop ceilings, florescent and track-mounted light fixtures, carpet and drywall installation, and other improvements; however, it is believed that original materials (with the exception of fixtures) are intact and could easily be restored. Four additional bays were added to the Maintenance Shed in 1981. Window and door alterations were made to the Maintenance Shed, Visitor Center and Ranger's Residence. However, these alterations are minimal and do not detract from the historic character of these buildings.

Beginning in the 1970s, annual visitation consistently exceeded 125,000 people per year and topped 200,000 in 1977. Living-history demonstrations, which began in 1971, have been popular summer attractions for decades, aided by donations of Conestoga, Murphy, and other pioneer wagons, period clothing, and props. In 1975, 752 people attended the bicentennial program "We've Come Back for a Little Look Around" at the monument.<sup>178</sup> The following March, "the bicentennial Wagon Trail, with entries representing each State in the Union, stopped at Scotts Bluff for two days. Over 12,000 people visited the monument during the event."<sup>179</sup>

While the 1970s were characterized by new visitor-oriented programs, the 1980s focused on environmental remediation. In 1981, prairie dogs, which had been absent from the park since 1943, returned (seemingly of their own accord) to the monument. Today, at least two colonies exist in the northwest section. Asphalt paths remaining at the Scotts Bluff Country Club were demolished in 1983 to restore the northeast quadrant, and in 1984, a Prairie Restoration Plan was initiated to prepare and plant native seeds. In 1986, researchers at Iowa State University, with funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, began a wildlife survey at the monument.

Other changes at the monument included modification to the parking area at the base of Scotts Bluff, which in 1988 was expanded to the east to accommodate buses and recreation vehicles. In 1994, a time capsule was buried by the flagpole to celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the monument; the time capsule is scheduled to be opened on December 12, 2069. Further activities included the May 16, 1988, opening ceremony and start of the Special Olympics Torch Run, which began at the summit. On September 19, 2007, the seventieth anniversary of the opening of the Summit Road was celebrated with thirty-five pre-1938 vehicles driving to the summit.<sup>180</sup>

<sup>176</sup> C. Madrid French, "What is Mission 66?", <http://www.mission66.com/mission.html>.

<sup>177</sup> Cockrell, "Scotts Bluff National Monument: An Administrative History," [http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/scbl/adhi/adhi1.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/scbl/adhi/adhi1.htm).

<sup>178</sup> Osborne, "Scotts Bluff National Monument Timeline."

<sup>179</sup> Cockrell, "Scotts Bluff National Monument: An Administrative History," [http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/scbl/adhi/adhi1.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/scbl/adhi/adhi1.htm).

<sup>180</sup> Osborne, "Scotts Bluff National Monument Timeline."

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**The Monument's Changing Boundaries**

At the time of the initial proclamation in December 1919, the monument included 2,053 acres. On March 9, 1924, President Herbert Hoover signed Executive Order 4008, which reduced the boundaries of the Monument to 1,893.83 acres. On June 1, 1932, Hoover signed Proclamation 1999, incorporating 1,346 acres of prairie lands along the eastern boundary, including Scotts Spring. Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Proclamation 2391 on March 29 1940, adding lands along the north boundary and several islands in the North Platte River. Finally, on June 30, 1961, Congress passed Public Law 87-68, which permitted the exclusion of 350 acres of "nonessential peripheral lands while allowing for the acquisition of additional lands (210 acres) deemed necessary for the preservation of the 'scenic and historic integrity of Scotts Bluff and adjacent features.'"<sup>181</sup> Acquisition of additional lands continued through at least 1972, when the 86.76 acre Scotts Bluff Country Club was formally acquired by the NPS at a cost of \$669,400. As of 2002, inholdings belonging to the Union Pacific Railroad, the state of Nebraska, and the NPPD encompass a total of 51.8 acres within monument boundaries. Today, the monument includes approximately 3,000 acres.

<sup>181</sup> Cockrell, "Scotts Bluff National Monument: An Administrative History,"  
[http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/scbl/adhi/adhi1.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/scbl/adhi/adhi1.htm).

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # NE-11
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 3,000  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**  
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>13N</u> Zone	<u>606940</u> Easting	<u>4634670</u> Northing	3	<u>13N</u> Zone	<u>608905</u> Easting	<u>4629689</u> Northing
2	<u>13N</u> Zone	<u>609163</u> Easting	<u>4634043</u> Northing	4	<u>13N</u> Zone	<u>605615</u> Easting	<u>4630346</u> Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The exact boundaries of Scotts Bluff National Monument are difficult to describe verbally due to the nature of the badland topography near the monument's northern boundary. Derived from a dataset containing 342 National Park System unit boundaries, the below metadata dataset was compiled (and edited) from a variety sources (including park-based GIS databases, U.S. Geological Survey 7.5' 1:24,000 quadrangles, NPS Park Land Status Maps, legal descriptions, etc.). The boundaries are in Latitude-Longitude (Clarke 1866-NAD83) decimal degrees.

West Bounding Coordinate: -103.74663  
East Bounding Coordinate: -103.68121  
North Bounding Coordinate: 41.86887  
South Bounding Coordinate: 41.80845

More specifically,

Beginning at a point of Nebraska State Highway 92 about 1100 feet southeast of its intersection with a county road in Section 32 of Township 22 of Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska, the boundary of Scotts Bluff National Monument meanders northward about 1200 feet to its intersection with the north border of Section 32 where it then proceeds due north about 1300 feet to a point where it turns due east about 1500 feet to a point slightly west of an intermittent stream which it follows northward about 1500 feet to the stream's intersection with the Mitchell and Gering Canal. The boundary then follows the Canal eastward about 2700 feet to a point where it turns north-northeast about 1700 feet to its intersection with the North Platte River which it follows eastward about 7700 feet to a point where it turns due south about 1800 feet to a point where it turns westward following the Gering Canal about 1500 feet to a point where it turns southward following an intermittent stream about 5700 feet to the point where the southern of two power transmission lines running west from Gering turns south-southwest. At this point the boundary proceeds due south about 1400 feet where it crosses an intermittent stream and follows along its south side about 1800 feet southwestward to a point where it turns and proceeds due south about 2800 feet to a point where it turns due east about 1300 feet to a point where it turns due south about 1600 feet to its intersection of a stream which it then follows west-northwestward about 2300 feet to a point where the boundary turns due north about 600 feet to a point where it turns due west about 3100 feet to a point where it turns due north about 700 feet to a point where it turns northwest about 1000 feet to a point where it turns due west about 4700 feet to a point where it turns north-northwest about 3400 feet to its intersection of Scotts Bluff Lateral Stream which it follows about 1800 feet to the intersection of the stream and the south border of Township 22. At this point the boundary turns due east about 900 feet to a point where it turns due north about 200 feet to a dirt road which it follows north-northwestward about 3300 feet to its intersection with State Highway 92, which it then follows about 1800 feet northwest to the point of beginning.

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**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries of Scotts Bluff National Monument (as of July 2011) were selected as being the boundaries for the National Register listing of the Scotts Bluff National Monument Historic District because they are the extent of federal holdings and monument lands. All resources listed in this nomination fall within the boundaries of the monument unless otherwise noted.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Natalie K. Perrin, M.S. / Architectural Historian, Emily Greenwald, Ph.D./Associate Historian, and Joshua Pollarine, M.A./Research Historian

organization Historical Research Associates, Inc. date October 24, 2012

street & number P.O. Box 7086 telephone 406-721-1958

city or town Missoula state MT zip code 59807-7086

e-mail nperrin@hrassoc.com; egreenwald@hrassoc.com

**Additional Documentation**

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** None

**Photographs:**

See Photograph Continuation Sheet and Sketch Map

**Property Owner:**

name U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service

street & number 190276 Old Oregon Trail telephone 308-436-4340

city or town Gering state NE zip code 69341

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 CA. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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FIGURE 39. CAMPFIRE CIRCLE, OCTOBER 10, 1965. IMAGE COURTESY OF SCOTTS BLUFF NATIONAL MONUMENT. ....66



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Figure 1. Early Visitors to Scotts Bluff, c. 1916. Image courtesy of Glenn Kelly, on file at North Platte Valley Museum.

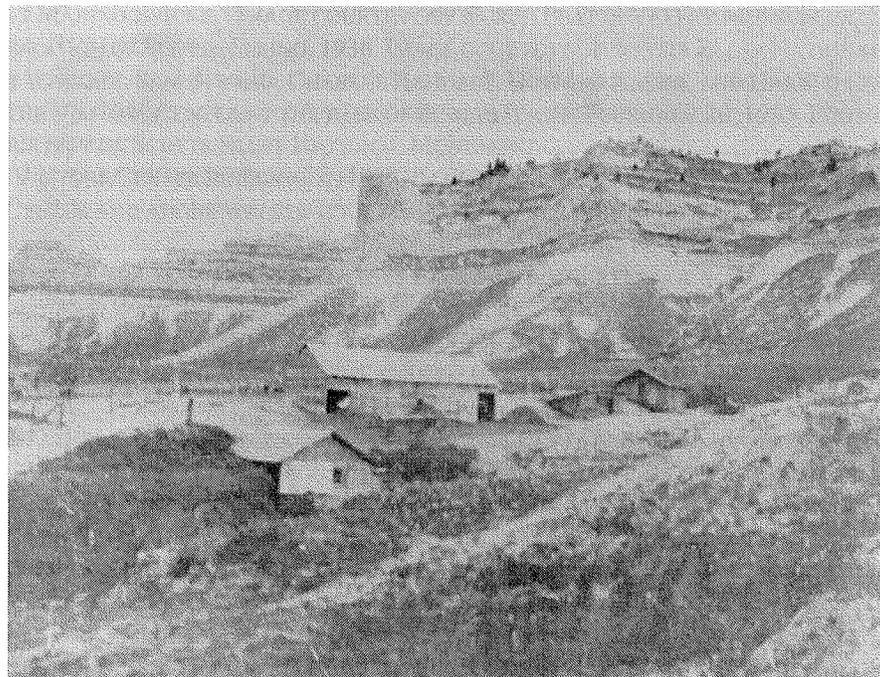


Figure 2. Bracken Family Horse Ranch, c. 1921. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

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Figure 3. Mitchell Pass, c. 1915. Image courtesy of the North Platte Valley Museum.



Figure 4. Mitchell Pass, present day Nebraska 92, following grading and graveling, c. 1932. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

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Figure 5. Original Scotts Bluff Country Club building, c. 1920. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.



Figure 6. Scotts Bluff Country Club, c. 1970. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

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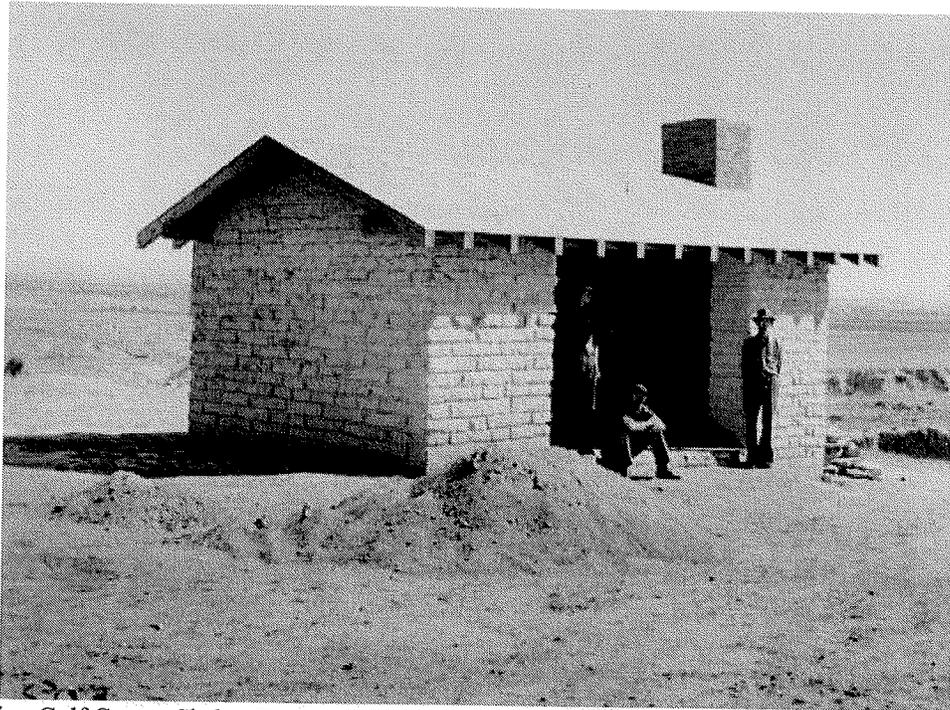


Figure 7. Gering Golf Course Shelter House, constructed by the CCC, 1937. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

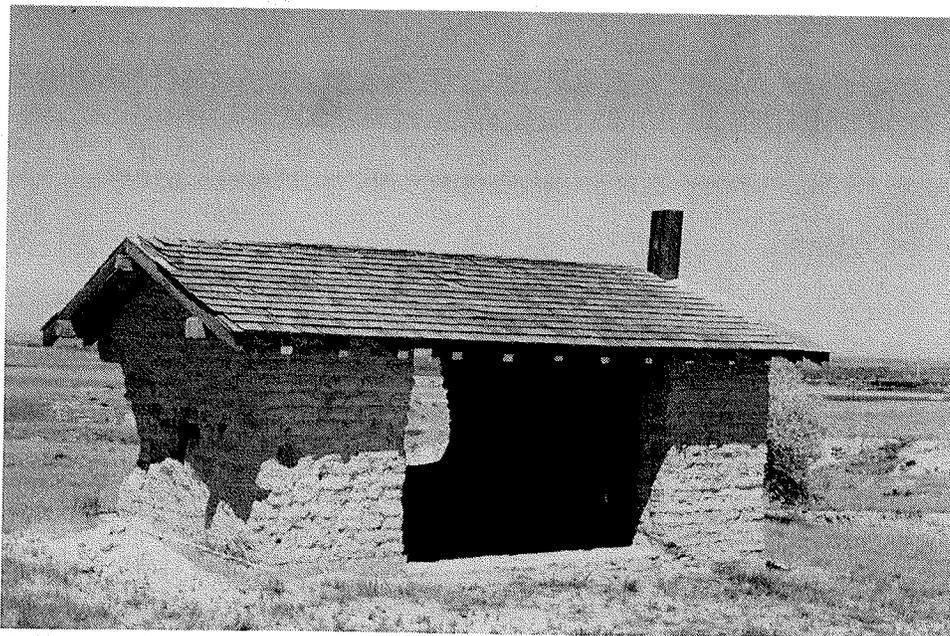


Figure 8. Gering Golf Course Shelter House just prior to demolition, July 19, 1950. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

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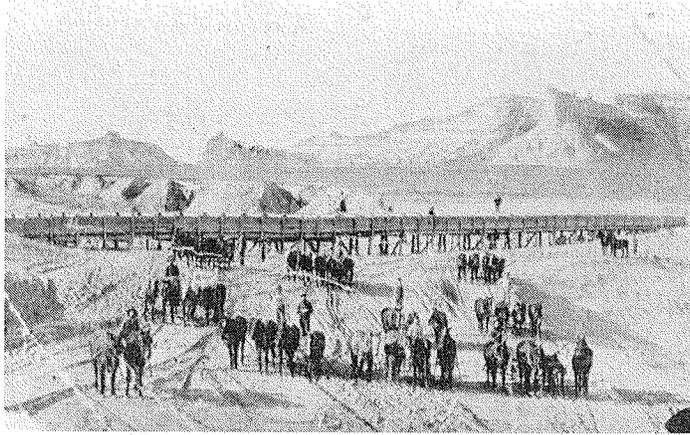


Figure 9. Construction of the Gering Canal flume, c. 1909. Image courtesy of North Platte Valley Museum.

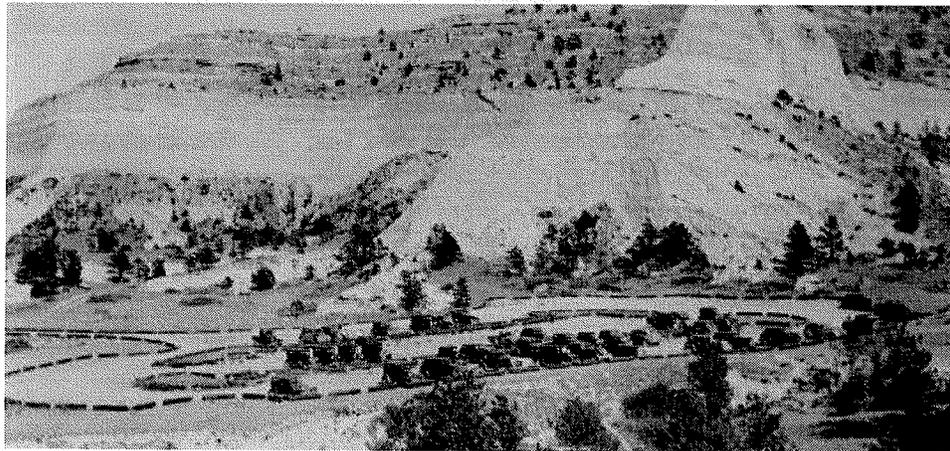


Figure 10. Picnic Grounds west of South Bluff, c. 1940, no longer extant. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

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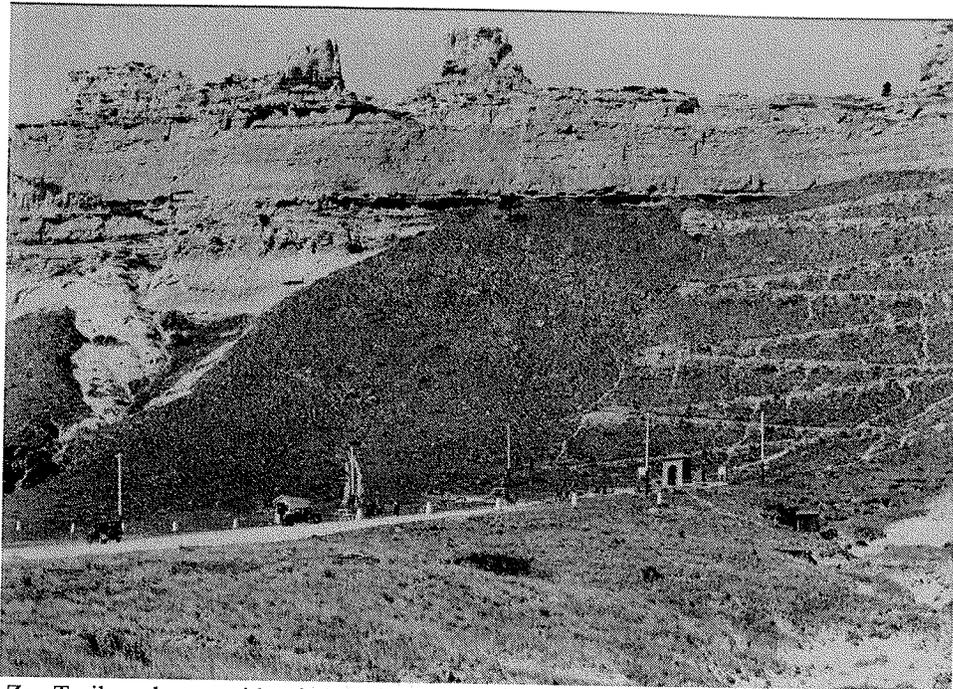


Figure 11. Zig Zag Trail on the east side of Scotts Bluff, showing power line that brought electricity to the area. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

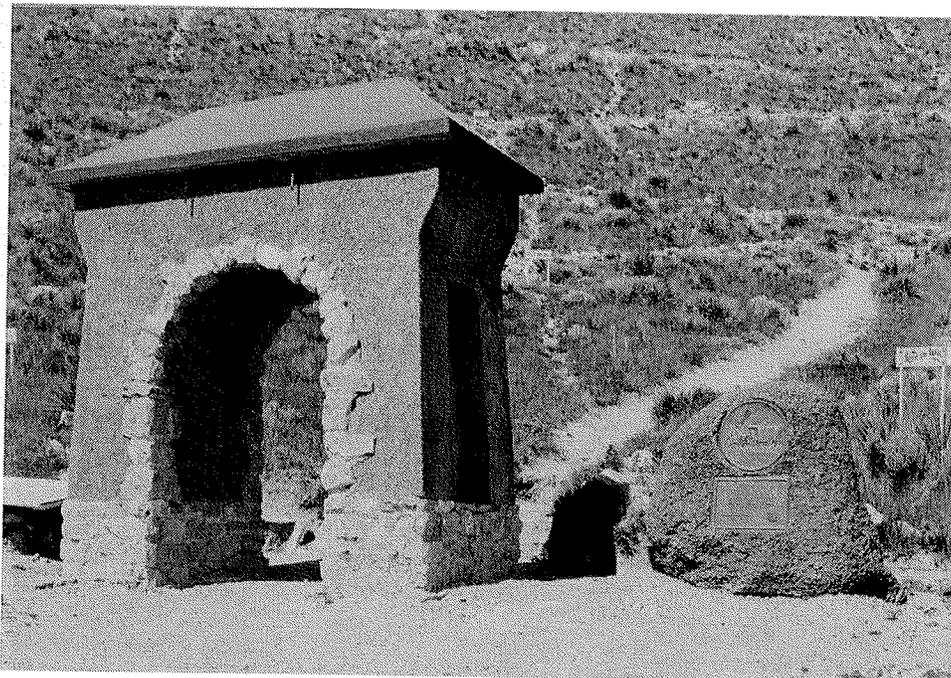


Figure 12. Memorial Arch and Hiram Scott plaque at the base of Zig Zag Trail, 1932. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

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Figure 13. CCC Camp at Scotts Bluff, 1935. Note the tent camp in the background (left), which was used during construction of the “permanent” camp. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.



Figure 14. “CCC Boys Making Bricks.” Image courtesy of North Platte Valley Museum.

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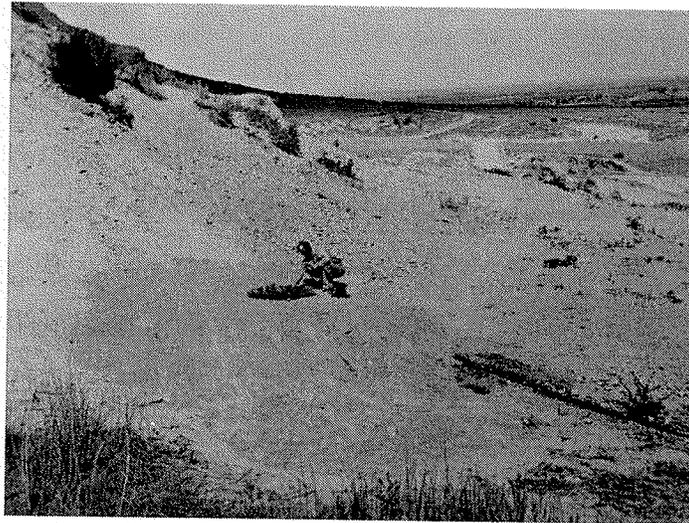


Figure 15. CCC restoration of Scotts Spring, 1936. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

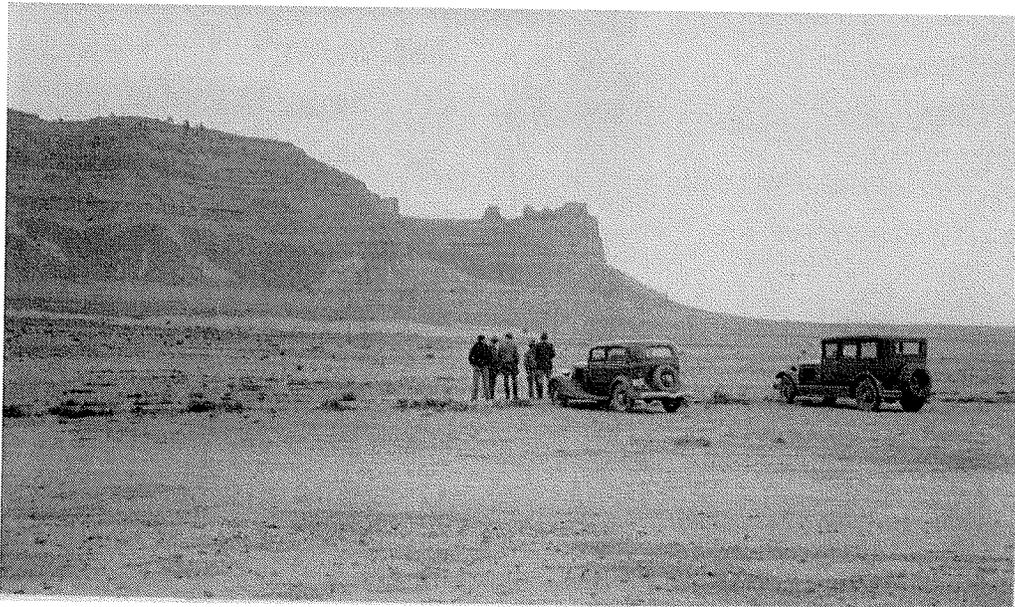


Figure 16. From left to right: Sam Serano, Charles Randals, Howard Baker, and Harold Cook survey the future site of the Visitors Center at the base of Scotts Bluff, February 20, 1935. Photo by F. H. Shoemaker, courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

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Figure 17. Original Visitors Center building, c. 1935. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

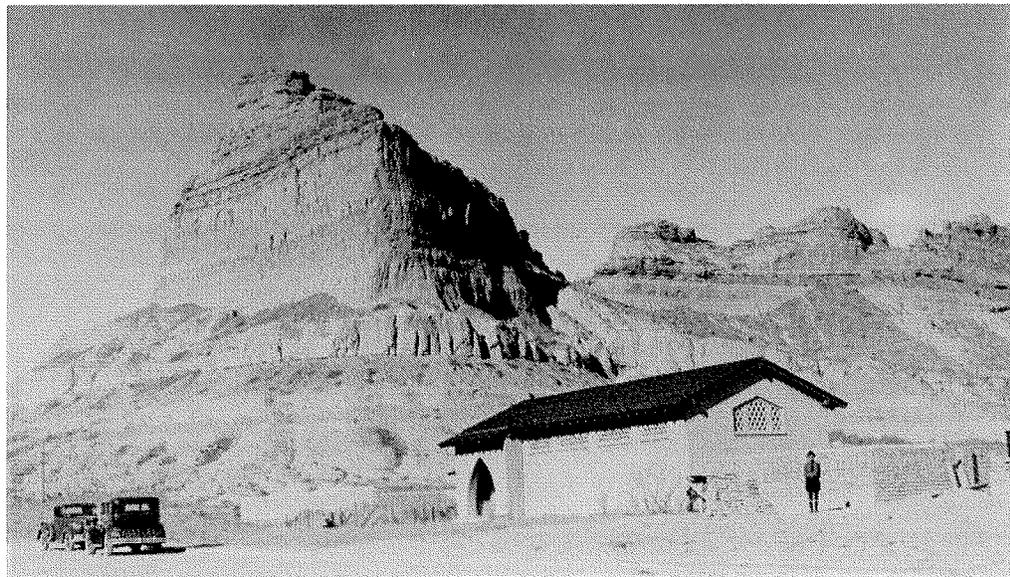


Figure 18. Visitors Center and adobe walled courtyard, c. 1935. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

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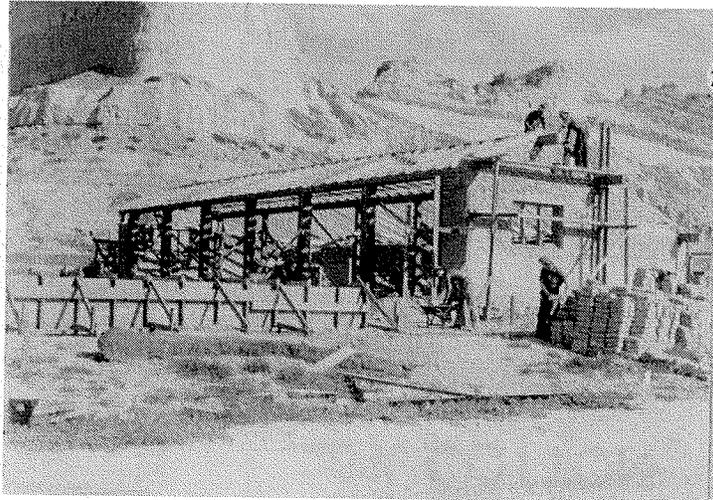


Figure 19. Construction of the Maintenance Shed, c. 1936. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

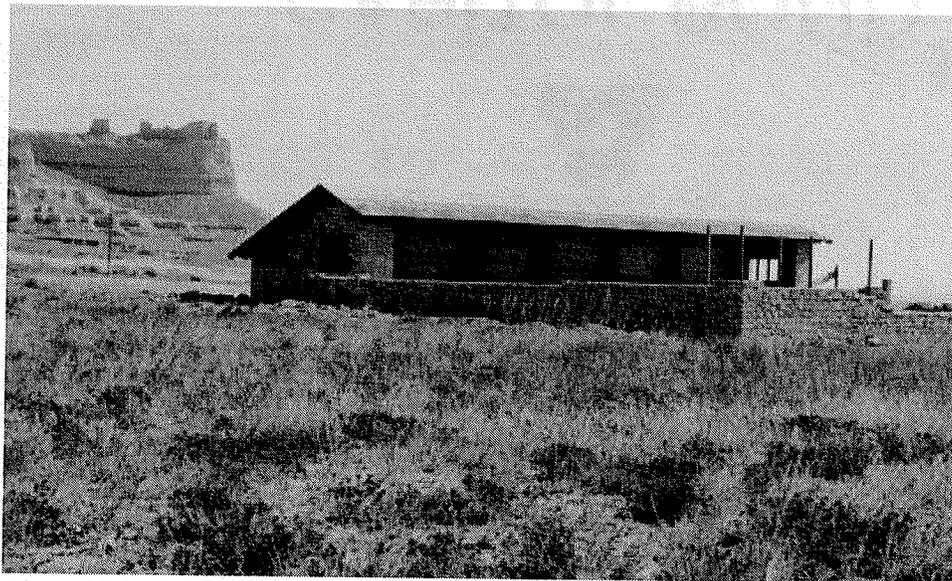


Figure 20. Maintenance shed, 1936. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

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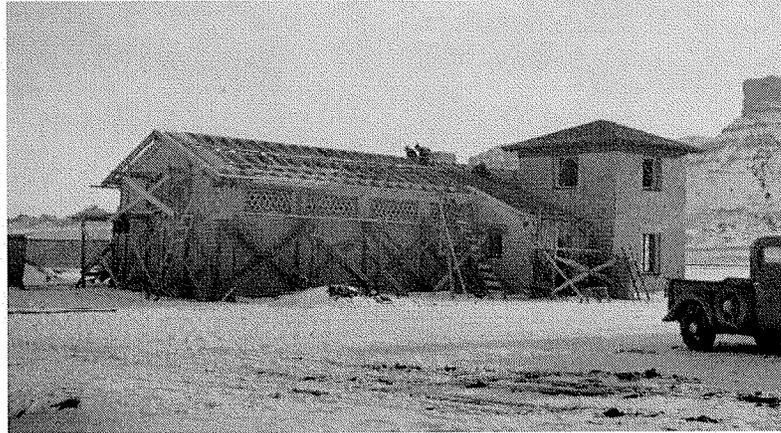


Figure 25. Construction of Paleontology wing and tower addition to Visitors Center, c. 1939. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

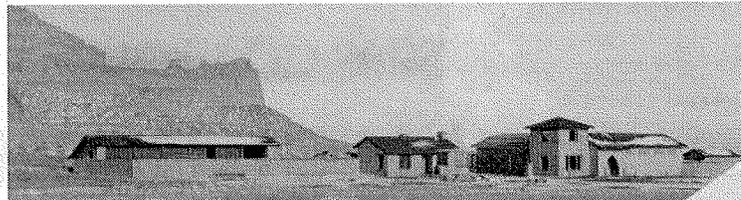


Figure 26. Visitors Center complex, c. 1939. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.



Figure 27. Visitors Center, c. 1942. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

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Figure 28. Interior of Visitors Center, reception desk, 1940. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

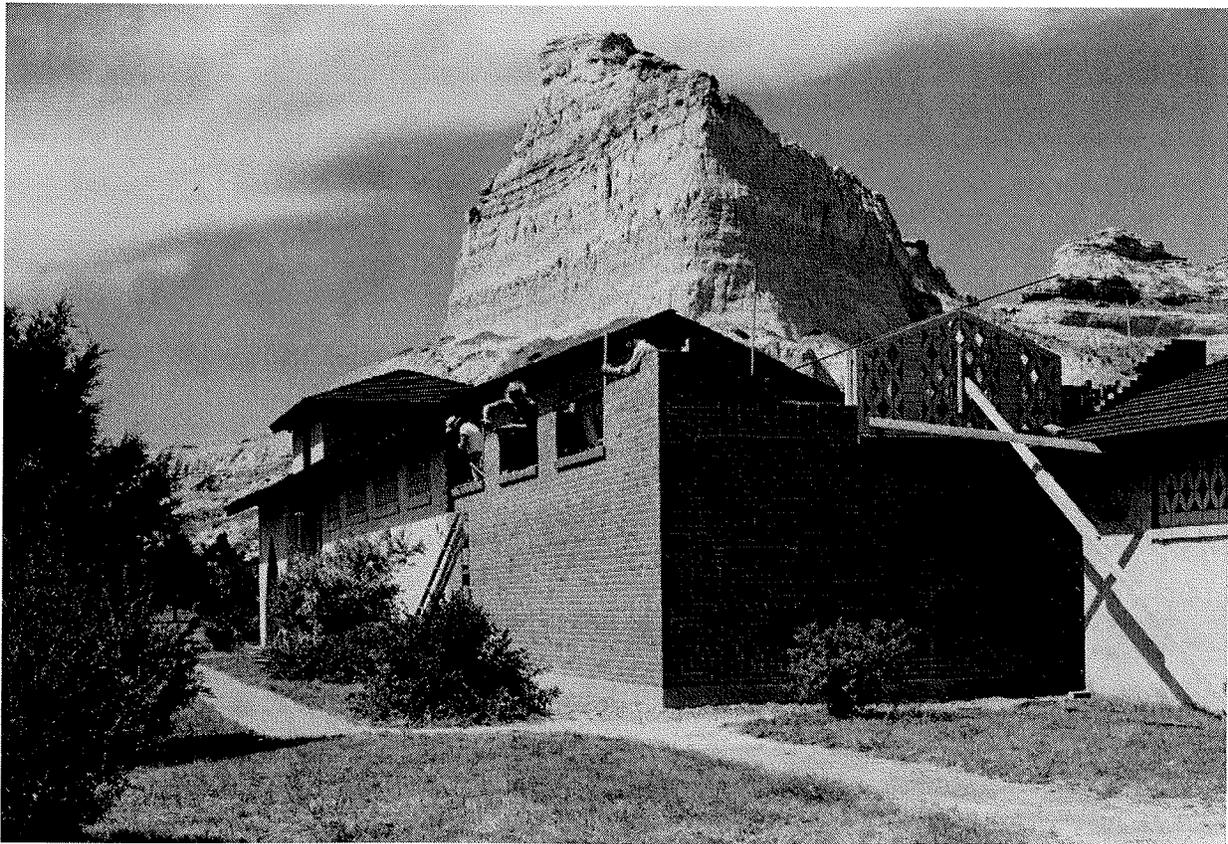


Figure 29. Construction of the Jackson wing of the Visitors Center, 1949. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

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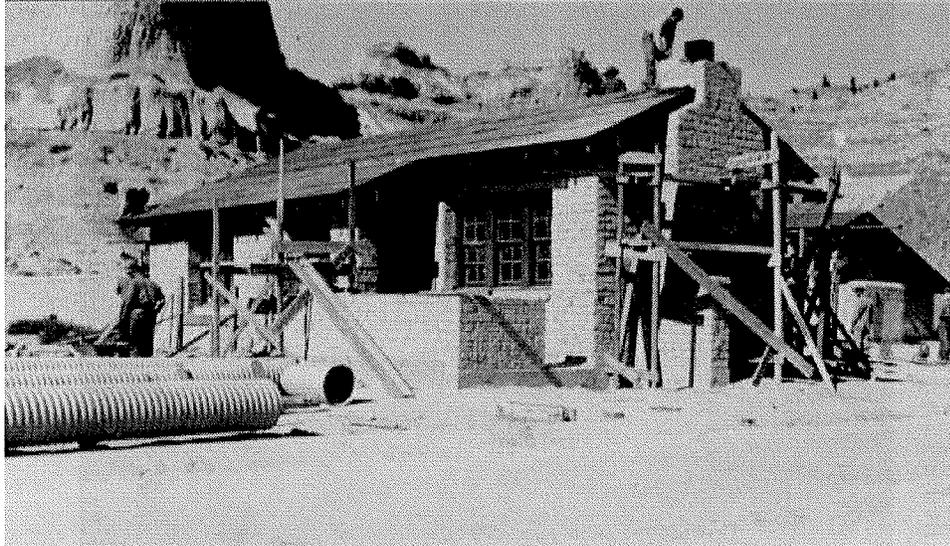


Figure 30. Ranger's Residence under construction, 1939. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.



Figure 31. Addition to the Ranger's Residence, under construction, October 16, 1949. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

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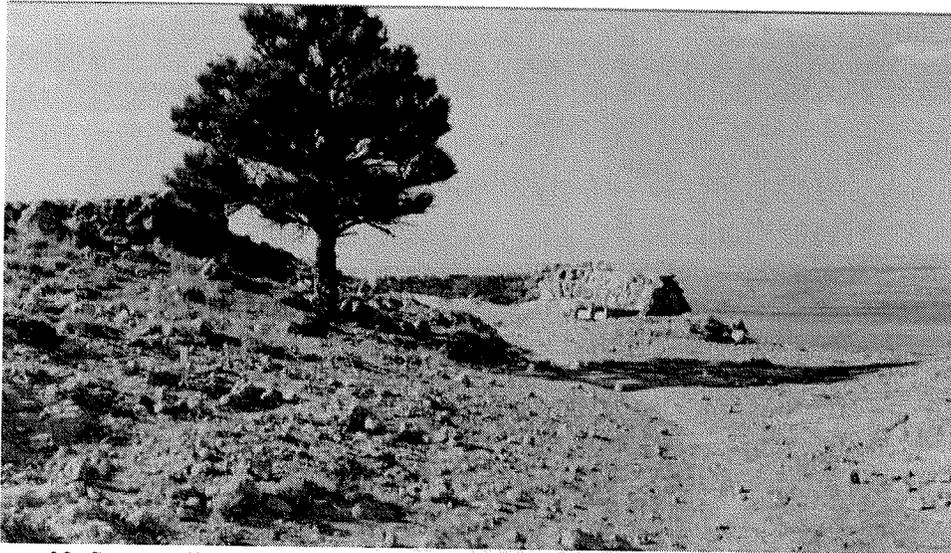


Figure 32. Stone walls at summit, c. 1937. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

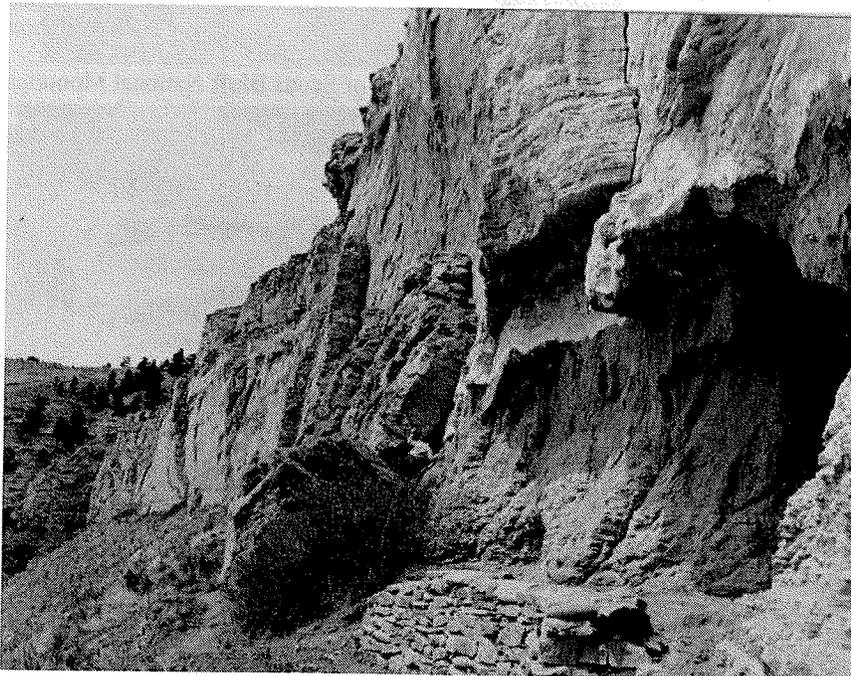


Figure 33. Stone walls at base of pedestrian tunnel on north side of Scotts Bluff, May 27, 1956. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

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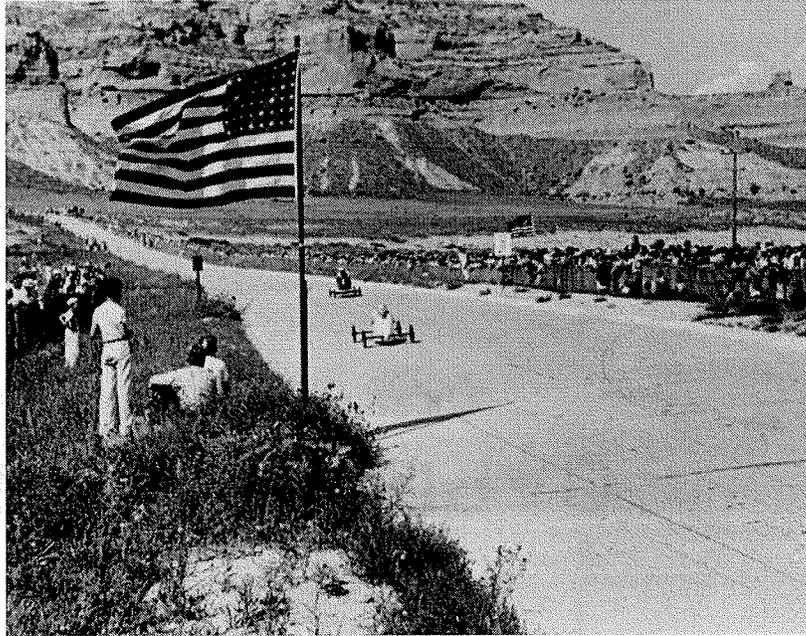


Figure 34. Soap Box Derby, 1940. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

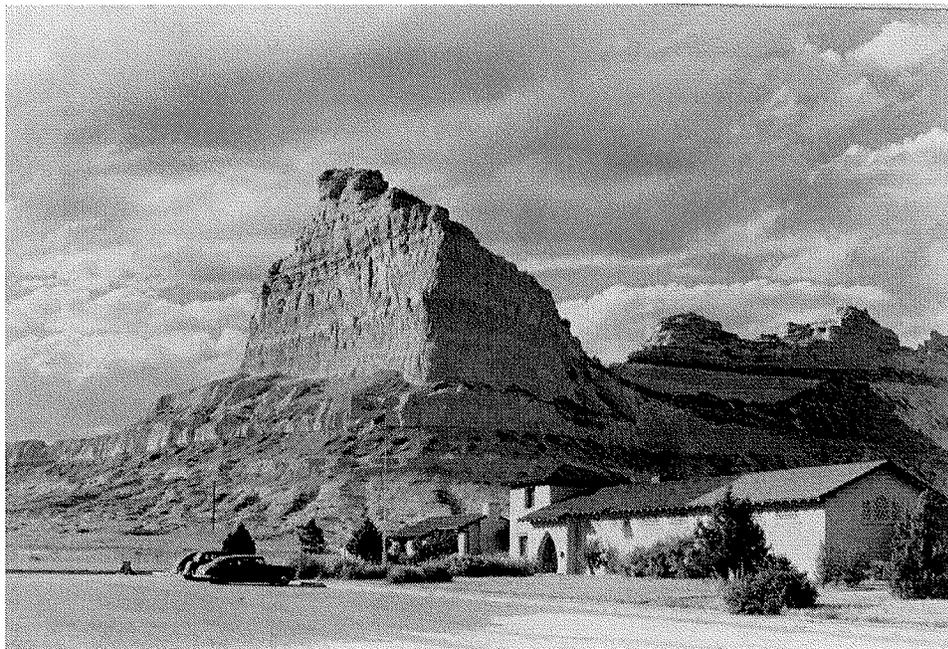


Figure 35. Scotts Bluff National Monument Visitors Center complex, August 24, 1949. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

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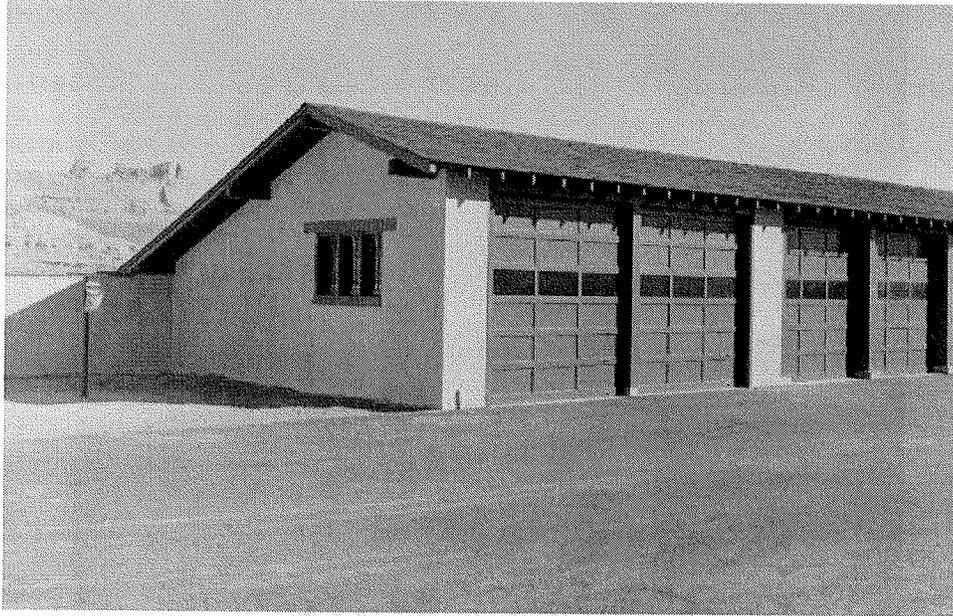


Figure 36. Maintenance Shed following completion of two-bay addition, 1958. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

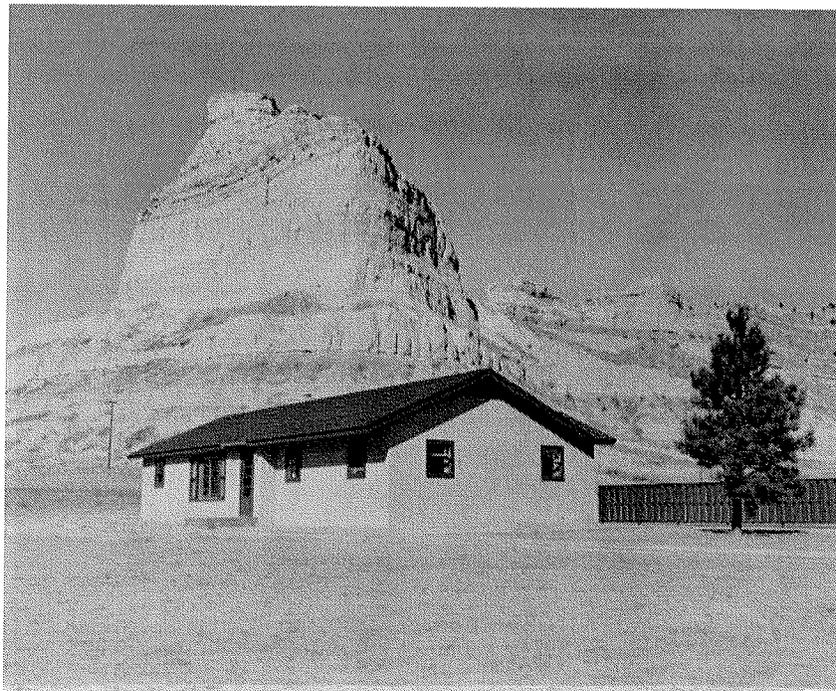


Figure 37. Mission 66 Residence, c. 1958. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

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Figure 38. Maintenance Shed, Ranger's Residence, Mission 66 Residence, and courtyard, c. 1958. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

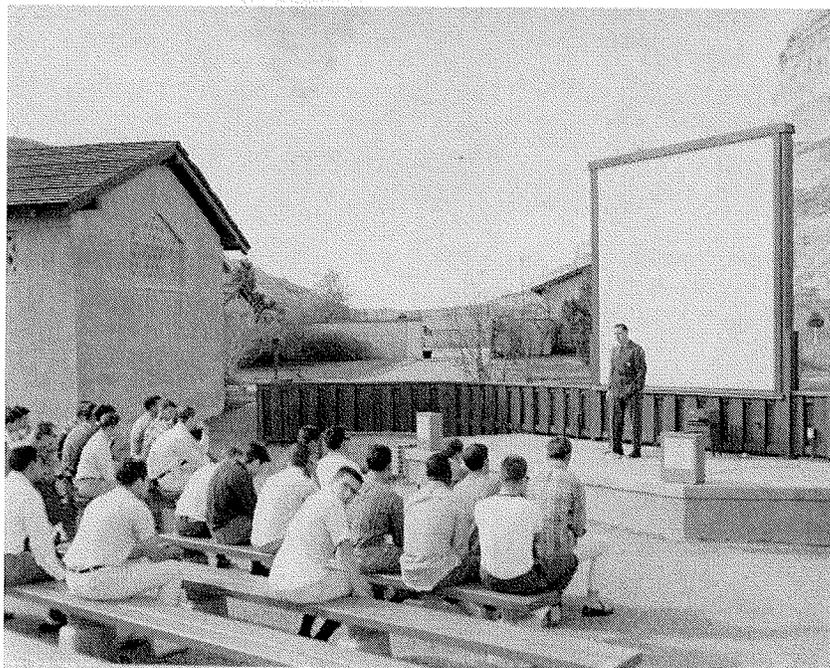


Figure 39. Campfire Circle, October 10, 1965. Image courtesy of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

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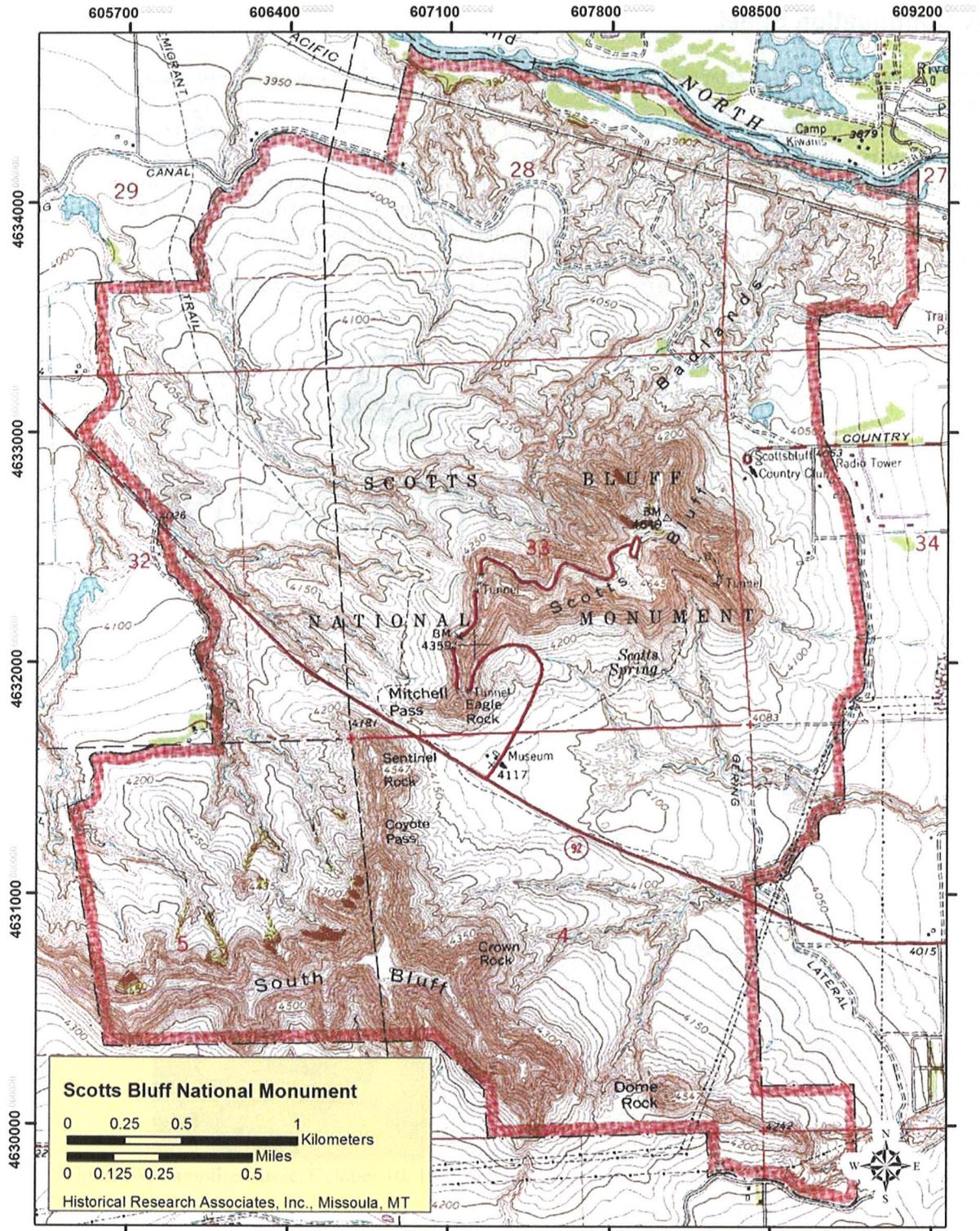
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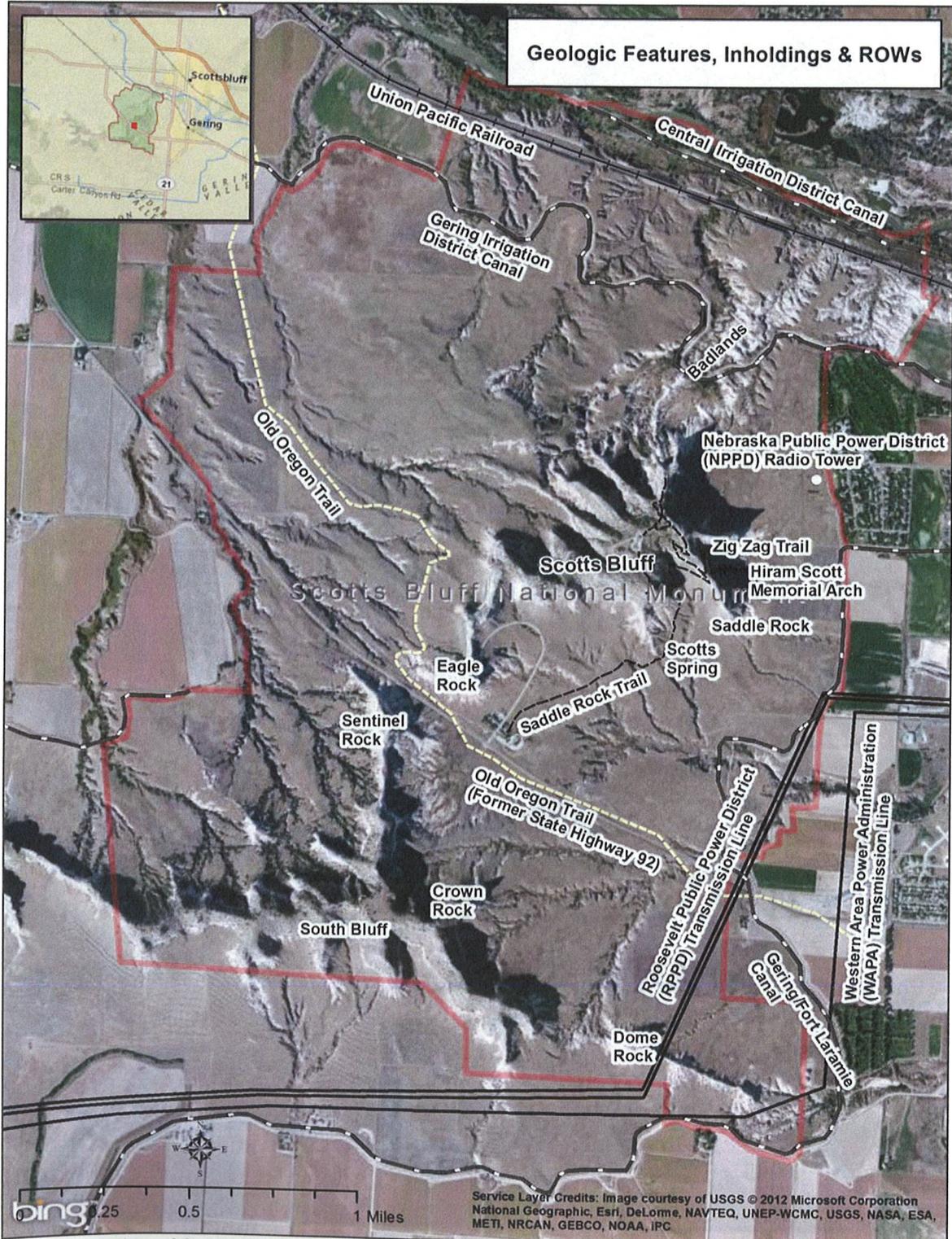
Map 1. Boundaries of Scotts Bluff National Monument, USGS Scottsbluff South topographic quadrangle, showing locations of resources.

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Map 2. Boundaries of Scotts Bluff National Monument, aerial view, showing locations of geologic features, inholdings and right-of-ways.

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Map 3. Scotts Bluff National Monument Visitor Center and surrounding area, aerial view, showing locations of resources.

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Map 4. Scotts Bluff National Monument northwest of Visitor Center, aerial view, showing locations of resources.

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Map 5. Scotts Bluff National Monument summit, aerial view, showing locations of resources.

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**▲** Contributing Archeological Site  
**●** Not Contributing Archeological Site  
 [ ] Park Boundary

N  
 0 0.5 1 Miles

**Restricted**

Sources: Esri, DeLorme, NAVTEQ, TomTom, Intermap, iPC, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), and the GIS User Community

Map 6. REDACTED – NOT FOR PUBLIC RELEASE. Archaeological sites at Scotts Bluff National Monument.



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Name of Property: Scotts Bluff National Monument  
County and State: Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska  
Name of Photographer: Natalie K. Perrin, M.S.  
Date of Photograph: May 16, 2011  
Location of Original Digital Files: 125 Bank Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Missoula, MT 59802

Photo 1. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0001.  
Viewing northeast, entrance signage and a view to Scotts Bluff in the background left.

Photo 2. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0002.  
Viewing northwest, Scotts Bluff showing Eagle Rock (left) and Saddle Rock (right).

Photo 3. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0003.  
Viewing south from the top of Scotts Bluff, the South Bluff in the distance, the Museum complex (center) and Summit Road (right).

Photo 4. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0004.  
Viewing northwest, the Badlands area.

Photo 5. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0005.  
Viewing south, Scott Spring. Note the culvert (left).

Photo 6. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0006.  
Viewing northwest, the Entrance Booth southeast oblique.

Photo 7. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0007.  
Viewing northwest, the Museum and Visitor's Center complex; from left to right, Mission 66 Residence, Ranger's Residence, Museum and Visitor's Center, Comfort Station, and Pony Express memorial.

Photo 8. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0008.  
Viewing northwest, the Museum and Visitor's Center and Comfort Station southeast oblique.

Photo 9. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0009.  
Viewing north, the Museum and Visitor's Center southwest oblique.

Photo 10. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0010.  
Viewing southeast, the Museum and Visitor's Center west elevation.

Photo 11. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0011.  
Viewing southwest, the Comfort Station and Museum and Visitor's Center northeast oblique and Campfire Circle amphitheater courtyard wall.

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Photo 12. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0012.

Viewing south inside the courtyard wall of the Campfire Circle amphitheater; from left to right, the Comfort Station, Museum and Visitor's Center, projection booth, campfire circle benches, campfire circle and stage. Note Sentinel Rock in the right background.

Photo 13. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0013.

Viewing west, the Campfire Circle stage, screen, and brick campfire circle. Note Eagle Rock in the right background.

Photo 14. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0014.

Viewing southwest, the Comfort Station northeast oblique.

Photo 15. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0015.

Viewing west, main entrance and desk. Note exposed adobe bricks and wood ceiling.

Photo 16. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0016.

Viewing north, the Paleontology room.

Photo 17. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0017.

Viewing west, the original massing of the Museum and Visitor's Center, now the gift shop.

Photo 18. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0018.

Viewing northeast, the Jackson Memorial Wing.

Photo 19. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0019.

Viewing northwest, the ground floor of the tower and stairs to second level. Note the coffered ceiling.

Photo 20. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0020.

Viewing southeast, the second level of the tower.

Photo 21. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0021.

Viewing north, the Ranger's Residence (now offices) south elevation.

Photo 22. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0022.

Viewing northeast, the Ranger's Residence (now offices) southwest oblique.

Photo 23. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0023.

Viewing southwest, the Ranger's Residence (now offices) northeast oblique.

Photo 24. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0024.

Viewing north, the Mission 66 Residence south elevation.

Photo 25. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0025.

Viewing northwest, the Mission 66 Residence southeast oblique.

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Photo 26. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0026.  
Viewing northeast, the Mission 66 Residence southwest oblique.

Photo 27. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0027.  
Viewing southeast, the Mission 66 Residence north elevation.

Photo 28. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0028.  
Viewing northwest, the Maintenance Shed southeast oblique.

Photo 29. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0029.  
Viewing west, the Maintenance Shed (and partial courtyard wall) east elevation.

Photo 30. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0030.  
Viewing southeast, the Maintenance Shed northwest oblique.

Photo 31. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0031.  
Viewing southeast, the Vehicle Shed northwest oblique.

Photo 32. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0032.  
Viewing west, three picnic shelters.

Photo 33. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0033.  
Viewing northwest, Tunnel 3 on the Summit Road.

Photo 34. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0034.  
Viewing southeast, Tunnel 2 on the Summit Road.

Photo 35. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0035.  
Viewing north from the William Henry Jackson campsite, the three tunnels of the Summit Road.

Photo 36. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0036.  
Viewing northeast, the entrance to the Saddle Rock Trail at the top of Scotts Bluff.

Photo 37. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0037.  
Viewing northeast, tool marks and rock cuts (left) along the Saddle Rock trail. Saddle Rock is visible in the distance (right).

Photo 38. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0038.  
Viewing southeast, the entrance to the Saddle Rock Trail pedestrian tunnel on the north side of Scotts Bluff. Note the CMU retaining wall, which replaced a masonry wall at an unknown date.

Photo 39. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0039.  
Viewing south, the pedestrian tunnel on the Saddle Rock Trail. Note the tool marks and hand prints visible in the soft walls of the tunnel.

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Photo 40. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0040.  
Viewing north, the central observation point on the Summit Trail.

Photo 41. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0041.  
Viewing north, the Hiram Scott Memorial located on the Summit Trail. This memorial plaque has, at various times, been located at the base of the former ZigZag Trail and at Scott Spring.

Photo 42. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0042.  
Viewing northwest, the west observation point on the Summit Trail. Note the memorial bench (left).

Photo 43. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0043.  
Viewing north from the west observation point on the Summit Trail, the Gering Irrigation District canal and access road snakes through the north area of the Monument and through the Badlands. Note also the Union Pacific Railroad, visible in the center distance paralleling the North Platte River.

Photo 44. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0044.  
Viewing northeast, the east boundary fence of the Monument. Note the WAPA and RPPD transmission lines in the distance.

Photo 45. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0045.  
Viewing southwest, the granite marker, dated 1912, that marks the location of the Oregon Trail through Mitchell Pass. Also pictured (from left to right) are Eagle Rock, Dome Rock (in the center distance), Crown Rock and Sentinel Rock.

Photo 46. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0046.  
Viewing west, ruts of the Oregon Trail.

Photo 47. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0047.  
Viewing west, depression in the earth marking the location of the Oregon Trail.

Photo 48. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0048.  
Viewing west, the former ZigZag Trail. Note the pedestrian tunnel (upper center) that marks the location of the Saddle Rock Trail.

Photo 49. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0049.  
Viewing west, the former ZigZag Trail and archway (in ruin, pictured lower right).

Photo 50. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0050.  
Viewing south, the NPPD Radio Tower (left) and the site of the former Scottsbluff Country Club (right, no longer extant).

Photo 51. NE\_ScottsbluffCounty\_ScottsBluffNationalMonument\_0051.  
Viewing south, the former site of the picnic grounds located west of the South Bluff (no longer extant). The tracks from the former road are still visible (pictured center right).

