

**Scotts Bluff National Monument  
Oregon Trail Ruts Landscape Study  
and Environmental Assessment ■ 100% Report**

281 **Character Area A**

282 Character Area A is the primary area of visitor use related to the emigrant trail and  
283 includes Mitchell Pass and the areas immediately east and west of the pass. Area A contains  
284 visible emigrant trail resources, visitor trails and amenities. This area has highly erosive soils  
285 and is one of the steepest portions of the emigrant trail through the monument.

286 **Existing Condition**

- 287 ■ A large portion of the visitor trail in Character Area A is located on the emigrant trail  
288 rut resources – see analysis for evaluation of the trail rut resource.
- 289 ■ A large portion of the emigrant trail ruts in Character Area A are along the steep  
290 approach to Mitchell Pass from the east side. The resources in this area are ‘trough  
291 like’ rather than individual ruts. These are areas of concentrated storm water runoff  
292 and high erosion potential.
- 293 ■ An asphalt visitor trail with wood edge provides access from the Visitor Center to  
294 the Oregon Trail ruts. This trail section is not located on the alignment of the  
295 historic emigrant trail.
- 296 ■ An asphalt/chip seal visitor trail extends from the W.H. Jackson campsite to the  
297 west end of the ‘trough like’ ruts.
- 298 ■ The location of William Henry Jackson’s 1866 campsite is marked with an  
299 interpretive sign and bench and is located at the end of the asphalt/chip seal trail.
- 300 ■ The area has a variety of contemporary elements in place such as interpretive panels  
301 and drainage improvements. For condition and contributing rationale refer to Table  
302 1.

303 **Analysis**

304 **Trail Rut Resource**

- 305 ■ Approximately 25% of the trail in this area is a Class 5 (approximate original trail)  
306 due to the construction impact of the various phases of the county road Old Oregon  
307 Trail. The exact location of the trail is unknown - no trail resources are visible as the  
308 trail ruts were covered by the road or fill material for the road. It is unknown  
309 whether extant resources lie beneath the road. The Class 5 sections of the trail are  
310 non-contributing due to the trail not being visible. The original trail alignment has  
311 been lost.

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- 312     ■ Approximately 50% of the emigrant trail in Character Area A that is located between  
313     the two sections of the paved visitor trail is a Class 4 (altered and impacted) resource.  
314     The ruts have been altered by erosion, sediment deposition and visitor use. The  
315     Class 4 section of the trail is close to the original alignment and the trail is a  
316     contributing feature.
- 317         ○ The soils are highly erosive, leading to significant erosion along sections  
318         of the trail. Erosion occurs primarily in large storm events.
  - 319         ○ This portion of the trail is said to have been excavated to allow crossing  
320         of Mitchell Pass. Sections of the emigrant trail in this area are straight and  
321         steep. The combination of trail alignment, natural topography, erosive  
322         soils and visitor use contributes to erosion and runoff issues.
  - 323         ○ Drainage ditches and culverts have been constructed to control runoff  
324         and damage to the resources with limited success.
- 325     ■ Approximately 25% of the emigrant trail resource remains intact and is classified a  
326     Class 1 (unaltered original trail). The Class 1 section of the trail is located adjacent to  
327     the paved trail extending past the W.H. Jackson site and toward Character Area B.  
328     This section of trail in this character area is contributing.
- 329         ○ In areas of Class 1 (unaltered original trail) trail resources historic photos  
330         indicate that vegetation has encroached into the trail areas protecting  
331         them from excessive erosion. The vegetation encroachment and  
332         establishment of grasses helps reduce the erosion within and adjacent to  
333         the trail ruts.
- 334     ■ Much of the landscape adjacent to this area consists of naturally occurring, highly  
335     erosive soils and minimal natural vegetation. This increases runoff volumes along  
336     the trail corridor, particularly along the north (bluff) side of the trail.
- 337     ■ Degradation due to visitor use and erosion of the trail rut resources in Character  
338     Area A will continue to occur if actions are not taken.

339     Visitor Experience

- 340     ■ According to monument staff interviews, Character Area A has the highest number  
341     of visitors in the study area, primarily due to the close proximity to the Visitor

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- 342 Center and trail accessibility. The most convenient opportunity for visitors to  
343 experience the emigrant trail is in this area.
- 344 ■ Visitor experience could be enhanced and clarified with rehabilitation of interpretive  
345 resources, walking trails and the preservation of emigrant trail resources.

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**Figure 3 - 2.** Character Area A *Above* - Trail ruts existing condition (2010) (MBD DSC\_00151.JPG); *Below* - Trail ruts looking eastward (c. 1969) (MBD DSC\_0241.jpg) (source: SCBL archives)

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**Figure 3 - 3.** Character Area A *Above* - W. H. Jackson Campsite (2009) (MBD DSC\_0235.jpg); *Below* - W.H. Jackson Campsite (c. 1943) (MBD DSC\_0035.JPG) (source: SCBL archives)

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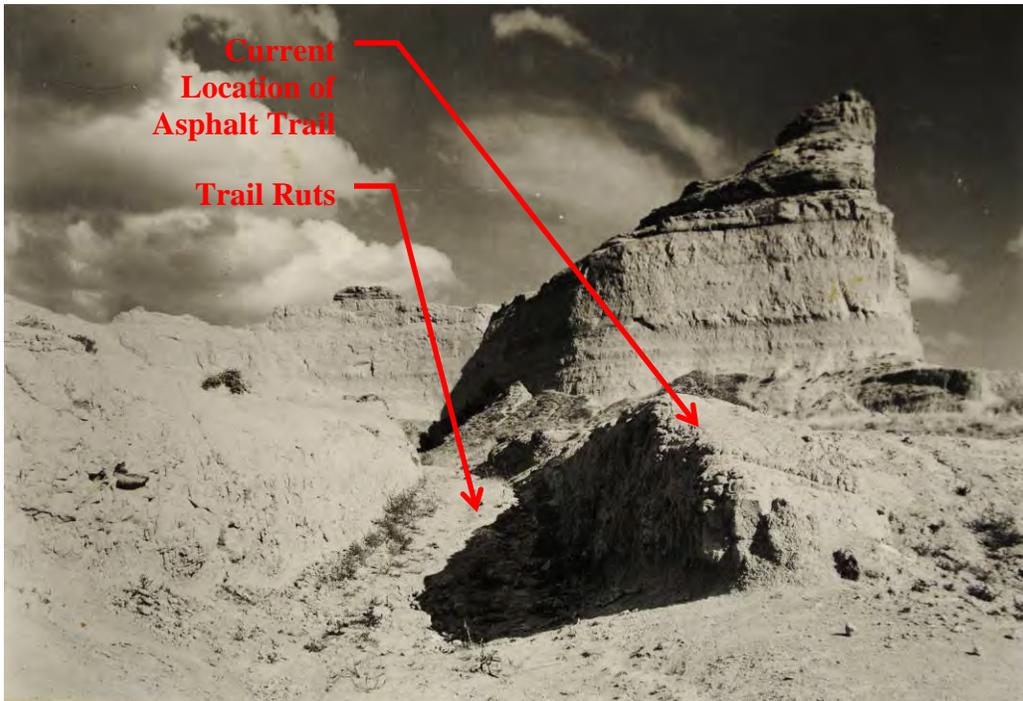
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**Figure 3 - 4.** Character Area A *Above*- Oregon Trail resource on left with asphalt trail adjacent to trail resource (2009) (MBD DSC\_0012.JPG); *Below* - Oregon Trail (c. 1950) (MBD DSC\_0026.JPG) (source: SCBL archives)

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**Figure 3 - 5.** Character Area A *Above*- Oregon Trail resource on left with asphalt trail adjacent to trail rut resource (2010) (MBD DSC\_00137.jpg); *Below* - Oregon Trail looking northeast toward Scotts Bluff (c. 1939) (MBD DSC\_0216.jpg) (source: SCBL archives)

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**Figure 3 - 6.** Wayside with granite bench and interpretive sign in Character Area A at the intersection of asphalt trail from Visitor Center and Oregon Trail resource- Class 4 (2009) (MBD DSC\_0012.JPG)



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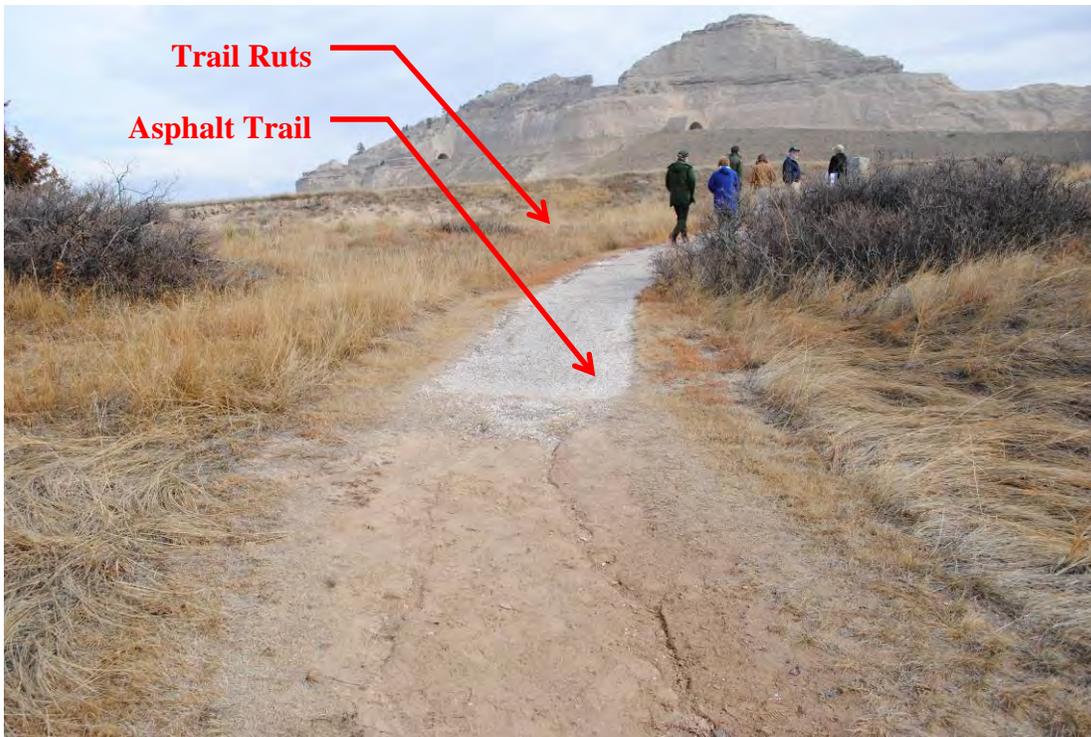
**Figure 3 - 7.** Visitor trail on trail rut alignment looking east – Class 4 in Character Area A (2009) (MBD DSC\_0020.JPG)

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**Figure 3 - 8.** View of trail rut resource in Character Area A (Class 1) from asphalt trail with W.H. Jackson campsite and double cut in background (2009) (MBD DSC\_0031.JPG)



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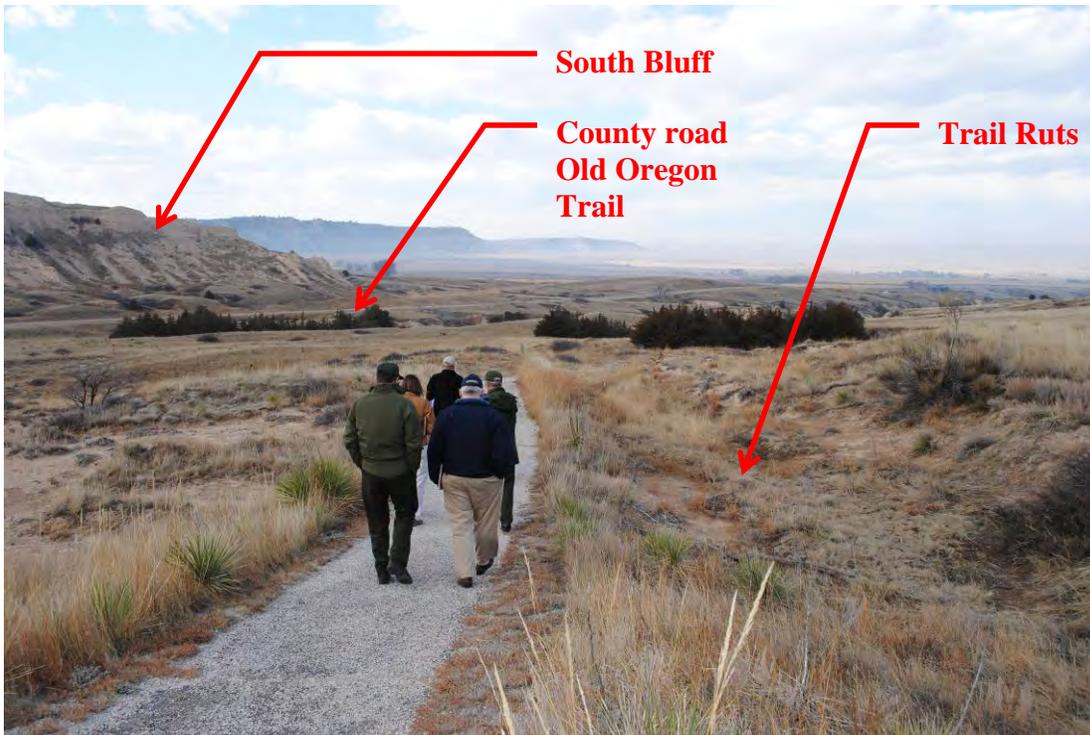
**Figure 3 - 9.** Transition from soft surface trail to asphalt trail in Character Area A – trail shifts from location on trail resource to adjacent to trail resource- Class 4 (c 2009) (MBD DSC\_0024.JPG)

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**Figure 3 - 10.** View of Eagle Rock from asphalt trail from Visitor Center in Character Area A. (2009) (MBD DSC\_0045.jpg)



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**Figure 3 - 11.** View of county road Old Oregon Trail and South Bluff in Character Area A from asphalt trail (2009) (MBD DSC\_0040.jpg)

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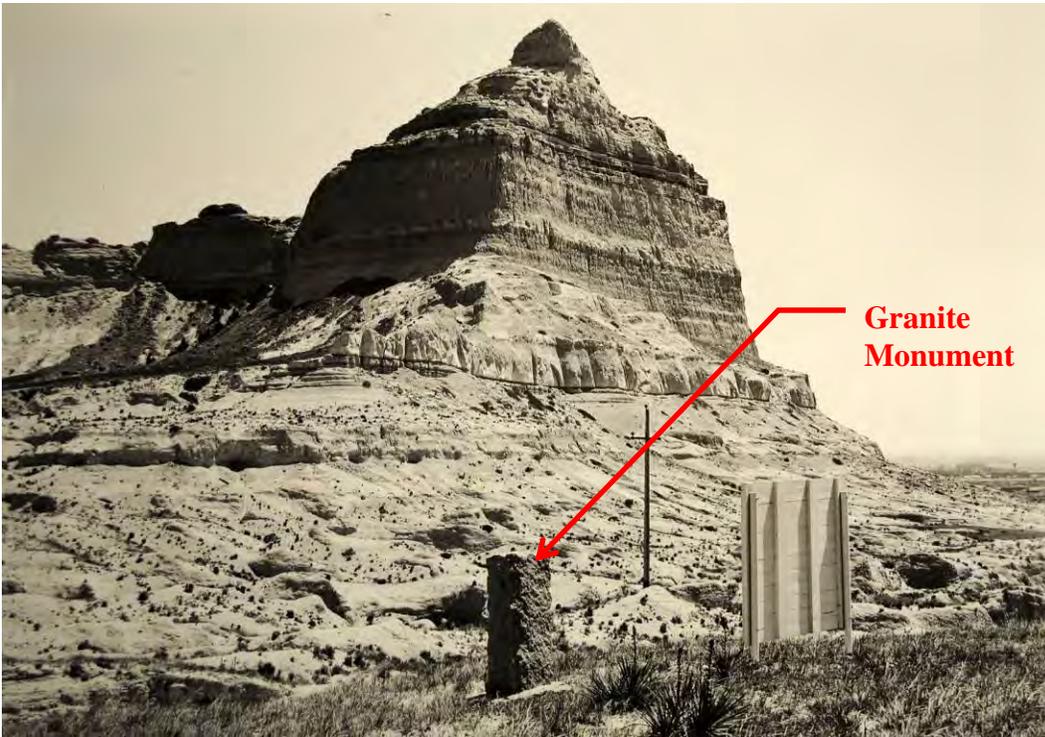
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**Figure 3 - 12.** Watershed to north of trail in Character Area A (2009) (MBD DSC\_0071.jpg)

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**Figure 3 - 13.** Character Area A *Above*- Eagle Rock, north wall looking northeast (2010) (MBD DSC00157.jpg); *Below* - Eagle Rock, north wall from old memorial site on road (c. 1935) (MBD DSC\_0203.jpg) (source: SCBL archives)

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**Table 1: Character Area A - Small Scale Features**

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Figure #</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>Contributing/Non-contributing</b>
<b>Asphalt Trail with Wood Edge</b>	3-14	Asphalt trail with wood edge extending from Visitor Center to Oregon Trail in Character Area A	Fair	non-contributing non-compatible <i>outside period of significance, materials non-compatible</i>
<b>Replica Murphy and Conestoga Wagon</b>	3-15	Wagons adjacent to asphalt trail with wood edger in Character Area A	Fair	non-contributing compatible <i>outside period of significance</i>
<b>Interpretive sign- "Traces of the Trail"</b>	3-16	Interpretive sign with metal frame in wayside in Character Area A where ruts cross county road Old Oregon Trail	Good	non-contributing compatible <i>outside period of significance</i>
<b>Granite bench</b>	3-17	Granite memorial bench on concrete pad at wayside in Character Area A	Good	non-contributing non-compatible <i>outside period of significance materials non-compatible location non-compatible</i>
<b>Corrugated metal culvert</b>	3-18	Corrugated metal culvert through sloped topography connecting man-made drainage channel along portions of trail in Character Area A	Fair	non-contributing compatible <i>outside period of significance</i>
<b>Corrugated metal culvert encased in concrete</b>	3-19	Corrugated metal culvert with concrete headwalls connecting man-made drainage channel along trail in Character Area A	Fair	non-contributing non-compatible <i>outside period of significance materials non-compatible</i>
<b>Asphalt Trail</b>	3-20	Asphalt trail with chip seal surface along portions of trail in Character Area A	Fair	non-contributing non-compatible <i>outside period of significance materials non-compatible</i>
<b>Granite Monument</b>	3-21	Granite monument engraved.	Good	non-contributing compatible <i>outside period of significance location non-compatible</i>

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**Table 1: Character Area A-Small Scale Features, continued**

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Figure #</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Condition</i>	<i>Contributing/Non-contributing</i>
<b>Interpretive sign for W. H. Jackson's campsite</b>	3-22	Interpretive sign with metal frame in wayside in Character Area A at historic location of W.H. Jackson Campsite	Good	non-contributing compatible <i>outside period of significance</i>
<b>Wood bench</b>	3-23	Concrete base with wood seat in wayside in Character Area A at historic location of W.H. Jackson Campsite	Poor	non-contributing non-compatible <i>outside period of significance</i> <i>materials non-compatible</i>
<b>Boy Scout Trail Marker</b>	3-24	Wood post with emblems indicating trail location of Oregon Trail/California Trail/Pony Express	Good	non-contributing compatible <i>outside period of significance</i>

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**Figure 3 - 14.** Looking west toward Mitchell Pass, asphalt trail with wood edge connecting visitor center/parking with Oregon Trail in Character Area A (2009)  
(MBD DSC\_0044.JPG)

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**Figure 3 - 15.** Replica Murphy wagon located adjacent to the asphalt trail in Character Area A (2009) (MBD DSC\_0043.JPG)



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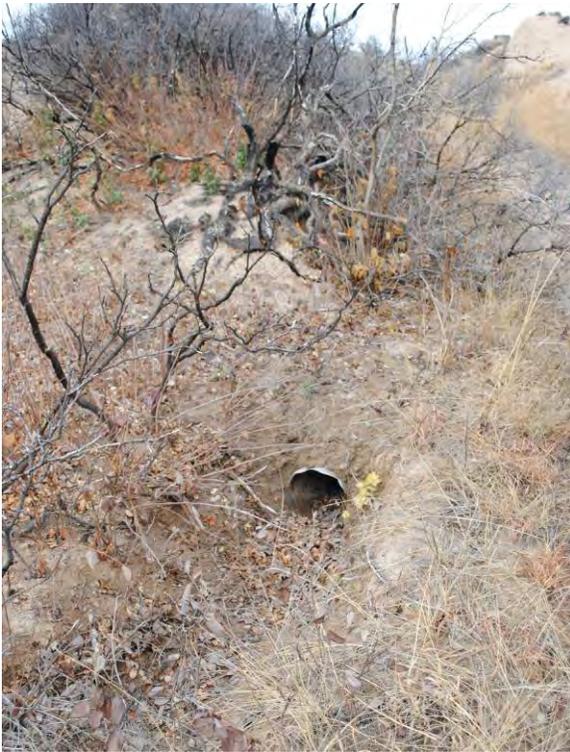
**Figure 3 - 16.** Interpretive sign at wayside with erosion sediment deposition in Character Area A (2009) (MBD DSC\_0011.JPG)

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**Figure 3 - 17.** Granite memorial bench at wayside in Character Area A (2009) (MBD DSC\_0013.JPG)



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**Figure 3 - 18.** Corrugated metal culvert for drainage diversion in Character Area A (2009) (MBD DSC\_0016.JPG)

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434 **Figure 3 - 19.** Corrugated metal culvert encased in concrete in Character Area A (2009)  
435 (MBD DSC\_0017.JPG)  
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438 **Figure 3 - 20.** Asphalt trail in Character Area A (2009) (MBD DSC\_0074.JPG)  
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441 **Figure 3 - 21.** Granite monument located along asphalt trail in non-historic location in  
442 Character Area A (2009) (MBD DSC\_0027.JPG)  
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445 **Figure 3 - 22.** W.H. Jackson Campsite. Interpretive sign with information about W. H.  
446 Jackson's 1866 campsite in Character Area A (2009) (MBD DSC\_0036.JPG)  
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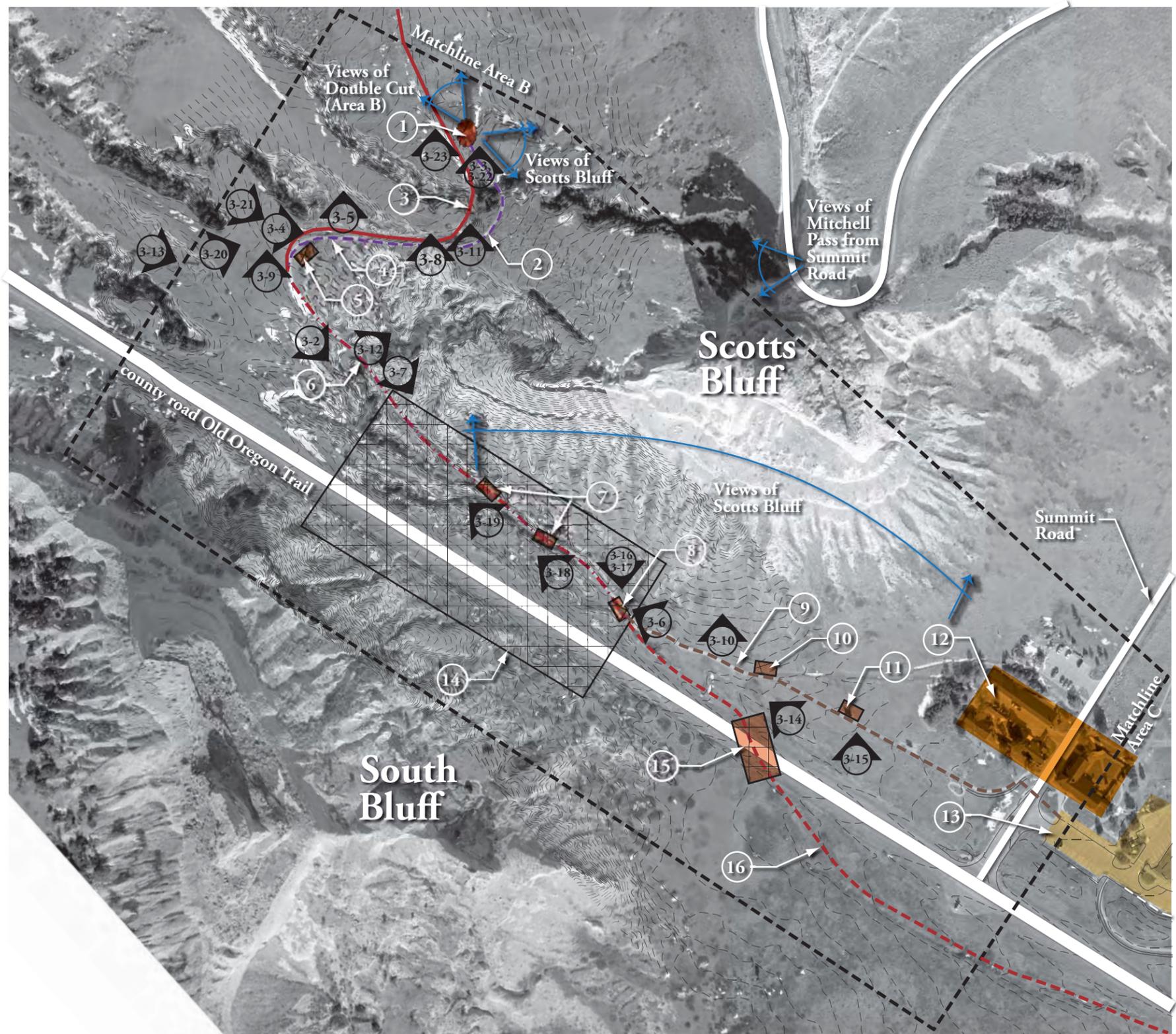
**Figure 3 - 23.** Wood bench at W. H. Jackson campsite in Character Area A (2009) (MBD DSC\_0117.JPG)



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**Figure 3 - 24.** Boy Scout Trail Marker in Character Area A (found throughout study area) (2009) (MBD DSC\_0029.JPG)

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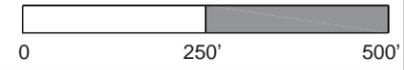


### Trail Classification

- Class 1 - Unaltered Original Trail
- Class 2 - Used Original Trail
- Class 3 - Verified Original Trail
- Class 4 - Impacted Original Trail
- Class 5 - Approximate Original Trail

### Legend

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| ① William Henry Jackson Historical Campsite/Wayside - with Interpretive Sign and Bench                                    | ⑫ Visitor Center/ Administration Offices/ Maintenance Shop/ Employee Residence |
| ② Asphalt Walking Trail   | ⑬ Parking  |
| ③ Trail Ruts Location - Class 1 (Unaltered Original Trail)  | ⑭ Mitchell Pass Area   |
| ④ Modified Topography due to Asphalt Walking Trail  | ⑮ Trail Location - Class 5 (Approximate Original Trail) (Road Crossing)        |
| ⑤ Stone Oregon Trail Marker   | ⑯ Trail Location Class 5 (Approximate Original Trail)                          |
| ⑥ Trail Ruts Location - Class 4 (Impacted Original Trail) (Existing Soft Surface Walking Trail Located on Trail Resource) | ▲ 3-1 Photo Reference Figure #   |
| ⑦ Drainage Improvements   |  |
| ⑧ Wayside with Interpretive Panel and Granite Bench   |  |
| ⑨ Asphalt with Wood Edge Trail  |  |
| ⑩ Replica Conestoga Wagon   |  |
| ⑪ Replica Murphy Wagon  |  |



<b>FIGURE 3 - 25</b> UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE SCOTTS BLUFF NATIONAL MONUMENT	TITLE OF PROJECT <b>OREGON TRAIL RUTS LANDSCAPE STUDY</b> ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT DRAWING TITLE <b>CHARACTER AREA A - EXISTING CONDITIONS</b> NAME OF PARK <b>SCOTTS BLUFF NATIONAL MONUMENT</b> REGION COUNTY STATE MIDWEST SCOTTS BLUFF NEBRASKA
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