

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

## **Chapter 2. Landscape History**

### **a. Introduction**

In the mid-1800s emigrants began travelling the Oregon Trail for over 2,000 miles from Missouri to the Oregon Territory along routes first established by Native Americans and fur traders. The first organized party of Oregon-bound emigrants travelled across the west in 1841, and soon was followed by thousands of pioneers headed west to settle new lands. By 1848 word of gold found in California dramatically increased the number of emigrants headed west along the route. The Oregon and California trails followed the same route until they reached Idaho, where the trail split with one heading toward Oregon and the other toward California.

The Oregon - California Trail, primarily referred to in this document as the Oregon Trail, is an important feature of the landscape of Scotts Bluff National Monument. The area between Scotts Bluff and South Bluff forms Mitchell Pass also known as “The Gap” during the days of the emigrant migration. “The initial route of the Oregon Trail that began in 1841 followed the south side of the North Platte River, until it approached the badlands area near Scotts Bluff. At that point, the travelers were forced to make a wide swing through Robidoux Pass, as the terrain through Mitchell Pass would not accommodate wagons.

Beginning in 1850, unknown laborers excavated the most treacherous segments which allowed passage and significantly shortened the distance traveled by the overland emigrants.”

<sup>1</sup> The trail through Mitchell Pass eliminated approximately eight miles off the emigrant trail and became the major passageway to the West. Depending on terrain, emigrants travelled between three to 28 miles a day, so the trail through Mitchell Pass would have eliminated the better part of a day from their travels.<sup>2</sup> Emigrants reaching this landmark and successfully navigating through Mitchell Pass would have completed one-third of their journey to Oregon.

With the arrival of the first emigrants in Oregon and California came the demand for overland mail service. The Pony Express was established in 1860 and also traveled the same trail through Mitchell Pass in an effort to deliver mail from east to west coast in a timely

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<sup>1</sup> NPS 1996

<sup>2</sup> *William Porter's Oregon Trail Diary 1848*

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

manner. The Pony Express was short lived and was replaced with the transcontinental telegraph line in 1861.

The largest voluntary mass migration in human history along the Oregon Trail ended in 1869 with the completion of the transcontinental railroad. The transcontinental railroad was known as the “Overland Route” and was built by the Central Pacific Railroad of California and Union Pacific Railroad.<sup>3</sup> The railroad connected Omaha, Nebraska and Sacramento, California. The risky journey that once took months could now be completed in a matter of days.

Evidence of activities occurring along the monument’s stretch of the Oregon Trail becomes unclear after the opening of the transcontinental railroad. Some sections of the trail may have been used by freighters, cattle drives or a means for local traffic.<sup>4</sup> Other areas of the trail were obliterated due to agricultural activities and construction of the State Highway (now county road Old Oregon Trail).

Scotts Bluff National Monument was established in 1919 recognizing the significance of the Oregon-California Trail, Mitchell Pass and Scotts Bluff and encouraging preservation of the landscape and memories that defined the mass migration of the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

## **b. Periods of Development**

Six periods of landscape change describe the physical evolution of the Oregon - California Trail as it relates to SCBL. The period of significance for the Oregon Trail within SCBL ranges from 1851 to 1869 and is listed below in italics. The periods of landscape change document the physical changes that modified the historic landscape of the Oregon/California Trail throughout its history.

- **Pre-Oregon Trail**
- **Oregon Trail (Robidoux Pass) Pre Mitchell Pass (1841-1850)**
- ***Oregon Trail - Mitchell Pass (1851-1869)***
- **Transition/Early Monument (1870-1932)**
- **Road Construction/Improvements (1933-1955)**
- **Modern Monument (1956-Present)**

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<sup>3</sup> *The Transcontinental Railroad*

<sup>4</sup> Knudsen

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

The beginning and end of each period corresponds to, and documents, points of physical change of the emigrant trail adjacent to and within SCBL (physical change is the primary rationale in defining the beginning and end of each period for the purposes of this study). Major physical change includes modifications to the topography, the development of the emigrant trails, road construction and other site improvements.

#### **Pre-Oregon Trail**

The lands now included within Scotts Bluff National Monument have probably been used by people for at least 9,000 years. Archeological sites have been found on all landforms in the park with many found near the springs north of the Oregon Trail. Areas in the vicinity of the monument are recorded as being favorite bison hunting grounds of the Pawnee, Cheyenne, Sioux and Arapaho Indian tribes.

#### **Oregon Trail (Robidoux Pass) Pre-Mitchell Pass (1841-1850)**

The area within what is now known as SCBL was a physical barrier during the earlier days of the emigrant trail. The bluffs within SCBL were important natural landmarks that not only marked the direction of the emigrant trail but also signified the completion of the first one-third of the journey to Oregon. The trail initially swung south of the bluffs to avoid navigating through the many deep gullies, ravines and badlands. This first route known as “the Pass at Scotts Bluff” by the emigrants, (later known as Robidoux Pass) was used exclusively until the Mitchell Pass route was improved in 1851.

#### **Oregon Trail Mitchell Pass (1851-1869)**

In 1850 anonymous laborers physically altered the area known as Mitchell Pass by filling gullies and building earthen ramps into the side of ravines. This allowed wagons the opportunity to safely navigate “The Gap,” now known as Mitchell Pass. This became the primary route in 1851 and cut approximately eight miles off the trail route. During 1852, the peak migration year, approximately 50,000 people passed through the area. The completion of the transcontinental railway in 1869 greatly reduced the number of emigrants using the Oregon Trail as cross country travel via railroad became available.

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**Oregon Trail Ruts Landscape Study**  
**and Environmental Assessment ■ 100% Report**

**Transition/Early Monument (1870 – 1932)**

Little is known about the area during this period of transition. It is believed that the Oregon Trail received little use during this period and limited changes occurred within the landscape other than natural weathering of the resources including soil erosion and vegetation encroachment. It is likely significant erosion may have occurred directly after the end of the migration due to the highly erosive soils and the initial lack of vegetation within the ruts.

After several efforts the area was finally designated a National Monument in 1919. Landscape development during this period focused on site improvements and trails associated with Scotts Bluff.

According to historic maps, in 1929 the Nebraska State Highway 92 (also known as Highway 86 and currently as the county road Old Oregon Trail) through the monument and over Mitchell Pass was still a country road. By 1930, the dirt road was part of the State Highway system and by 1931 the road was improved from dirt to gravel.<sup>5</sup> The road construction altered and obscured portions of the Oregon Trail.

**Road Construction/ Improvements (1933-1955)**

The beginning of this period focused on the Civil Conservation Corps (CCC) work that included the Summit Road to the top of Scotts Bluff, new trails, picnic grounds, and reclamation power lines. The Reclamation Power Line was installed and disturbed portions of the Oregon Trail. Realignment, grading, and seeding of Nebraska State Highway 92 also occurred. The initial construction and later re-alignment of the highway altered and obscured portions of the emigrant trail resources within SCBL. In 1953 the State Highway was realigned and straightened again. The initial construction and later re-alignment of the highway altered and obscured portions of the emigrant trail resources within SCBL. During this period, erosion and vegetation encroachment continued to occur, obscuring the emigrant trail resources.

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<sup>5</sup> Lind 2010

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**Oregon Trail Ruts Landscape Study**  
**and Environmental Assessment ■ 100% Report**

**Modern Monument (1956-Present)**

Mission 66 was influential during the beginning of this period. Mission 66 improvements primarily focused on small structure and new building construction. Portions of the Oregon Trail from the Visitor Center to W.H. Jackson's Campsite were paved. A portion of the asphalt trail near the campsite altered the topography created by the emigrant trail. The emigrant trail continued to erode and vegetation encroachment continued. The monument seeded sections of the Oregon Trail in the area of Mitchell Pass where erosion was a maintenance issue with grasses. The State Highway was re-aligned at the Monument's west boundary c. 1989 to its current alignment. The highway was also resurfaced, turned over to the County and renamed county road Old Oregon Trail. The Reclamation Power line was also removed, and the Boy Scouts installed trail markers showing the approximate locations of the Oregon Trail.

**c. Regional History**

**Geologic History**

Scotts Bluff, like the adjoining Wildcat Hills and nearby Chimney Rock, Courthouse and Jail Rock, has been and continues to be weathered out of geologic deposits of alluvial origin that made up the ancient high plains of the region prior to regional uplifting. Wind and stream deposits of sand and mud, wind deposits of volcanic ash, and supersaturated groundwater rich in lime formed the layers of sandstone, siltstone, volcanic ash and limestone that now comprise Scotts Bluff's steep elevation, ridges, and the broad alluvial fans at its base. Once regional uplifting began, the high plains that existed at that time now began to gradually erode away, except at certain locations that were protected by a cap rock of hard limestone that was more resistant to erosion. This cap rock covers the tops of the bluffs in the area, slowing their rate of erosion relative to the unprotected surrounding (and eroded) countryside. Erosion is usually unseen by humans, as wind, rain, and snow slowly wash away grains and particles of sand, silt and ash. This process resulted in the area's unique geologic features, such as Scotts Bluff.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Geologic Features* 2006

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

**Native Americans**

Native American tribes such as the Pawnee, Cheyenne, and Sioux inhabited western Nebraska until shortly before statehood in 1867.<sup>7</sup> A Trail Map, c1936 (Figure 2-4) denotes an “Old Indian Trail” in the Wild Cat Hills, indicating an earlier (and elevated) route through the region.

**Manifest Destiny and the Oregon Trail**

The story of the Oregon Trail lies within the broader context of "Manifest Destiny," referring to the territorial expansion of the United States from approximately 1800 to 1860. The Louisiana Purchase in 1804 and the War of 1812 laid the foundations for a national belief that the United States would eventually encompass all of North America, known as "continentalism." In 1818, the United States-Canada border was expanded as far west as the Rocky Mountains, and provided for the joint occupation of the region known as Oregon Country.

In 1843, Fort Bridger was established on the Green River (present day southwestern Wyoming). This was the first trading post designed specifically to re-supply migrants traveling the Oregon Trail, not for trading fur-trappers. Consequently, The Great Migration, a party of one thousand pioneers, headed west from Independence, Missouri, on the Oregon Trail guided by Dr. Marcus Whitman, who was returning to his mission on the Columbia River. They formed a train of more than one hundred wagons and had a herd of 5,000 cattle. The entire journey pioneers stayed close to a water source, beginning their travels along the south bank of the Platte before crossing north to Fort Laramie in Wyoming. There they followed the North Platte to the Sweetwater, which lead up into South Pass. Once through the pass, they crossed the Green River Valley to newly established Fort Bridger, then the pioneers turned north to Fort Hall on the Snake River, which lead them to Whitman's Mission. Once in Oregon, they struck out along the Columbia for the fertile lands of the Willamette Valley, the endpoint to a journey of 2,000 miles. After the mass exodus of 1843, the migration to Oregon became an annual event, with thousands more making the trek every year.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Cultural Diversity* 2003

<sup>8</sup> *Events in the West 1840-1850* 2001

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

In 1846, the Oregon Treaty divided the jointly occupied “Oregon Country” on the 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel. More pioneers were motivated to emigrate, as there was now an official US territory. This boundary remains today as the border between the United States and Canada west of the Great Lakes.

**Hiram Scott**

Hiram Scott was born about 1805 in St. Charles County, Missouri, and was an employee of William Ashley's Rocky Mountain Fur Company. He is also described as unusually tall and muscular. In 1826, Hiram Scott is believed to have taken part in the first fur trader rendezvous held near the Great Salt Lake, and it has been assumed that he attended those held in 1827 and 1828.<sup>9</sup>

It is believed that Hiram Scott was returning to St. Louis from the 1828 rendezvous when he died near the bluff which now bears his name. Almost immediately after his death, the bluffs along the North Platte River came to be known as Scott's Bluffs.<sup>10</sup>

The story of what happened near Scott's Bluffs was told and retold. With each telling the story took on new perspectives. Some stories included dramatic attacks by Indian warriors while other suggest murder and foul play. Some stories include the noble theme of the doomed Scott insisting that his comrades leave him behind so they might save themselves from his fate<sup>11</sup>.

Over the years, the geological features known as "Scott's Bluffs" have taken on their own individual names. They are now known as Dome Rock, Crown Rock, Sentinel Rock, Eagle Rock, and Saddle Rock. However, the largest and most prominent is known as Scotts Bluff, and still stands as a landmark for travelers.<sup>12</sup> Another feature named for Hiram Scott is Scotts Spring, located at the southern base of the bluff at an elevation of 4,150-feet. Scotts Spring, like Mud Springs (near Dalton, Nebraska), was an important water source for travelers through the region. Today, a plaque dedicated to Hiram Scott's memory is located along the North Overlook Trail on the summit of the bluff that bears his name.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Hiram Scott* 2006

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

**Scotts Bluff National Monument  
Oregon Trail Ruts Landscape Study  
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**W. H. Jackson**

William Henry Jackson was originally from New York and grew up painting and sketching. He learned the trade of photography before being called to service during the Civil War. Not long after the war ended, he decided to head west to Montana to seek his fortune.<sup>14</sup>

From Nebraska City, he took a job as a bullwhacker for a freight caravan headed west. Jackson began sketching the things he saw and the people he met. After passing through the Scotts Bluff region and forsaking his dream of striking it rich, Jackson left the freight train near South Pass in Wyoming and headed south for Salt Lake City and eventually California. His experiences in the West struck a chord in Jackson, and he began to realize that documenting the settling of the frontier might become his life's work.<sup>15</sup>

Jackson opened a photography studio in Omaha, Nebraska in 1869. He began photographing American Indians from the nearby Omaha reservation and the construction of the Union Pacific Railroad.<sup>16</sup>

These photographs came to the attention of Dr. Ferdinand Hayden, who was organizing an expedition that would explore the geologic wonders along the Yellowstone River. Hayden realized that a photographer would be useful in recording what they found. When offered the position, Jackson jumped at the opportunity.<sup>17</sup>

For the next several years, Jackson worked with Dr. Hayden for the United States Geological Survey. The Survey took him to such unique and unexplored places as Mesa Verde and Yosemite, which Jackson documented with thousands of photographs.<sup>18</sup>

Jackson's work for the U.S.G.S. ended in 1878. He continued to work in the West, opening a studio in Denver, Colorado, returning to portrait photography as well as documenting railroad construction to mining towns in the Rockies.<sup>19</sup>

At an age when most men have already retired, William Henry Jackson embarked on a new career. He chose to put down his camera and pick up a paintbrush at the age of 81. Jackson's eye for composition, coupled with the fact that he had experienced the

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<sup>14</sup> *William Henry Jackson* 2006

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.,



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

transformation of the West firsthand gave added credibility to his work. Soon his paintings of western scenes were in demand for illustrating books and articles. Jackson completed approximately 100 paintings, mostly dealing with historic themes such as the Fur Trade, the California Gold Rush and the Oregon Trail. Jackson revisited many of the sites he depicted in his paintings so he could paint them as accurately as possible. For those scenes that predated his own lifetime, he sought out and interviewed surviving participants.<sup>20</sup> Jackson originally passed through the Scotts Bluff region with emigrants from 1866-1867 at the age of 23. He returned to the region to paint after retirement in the 1920s and 1930s. A marker at the W. H. Jackson campsite within Scotts Bluff National Monument exists today.

William Henry Jackson died on June 30, 1942 at the age of 99, and was laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery. His long and active life paralleled the formative years in the life of the United States, and his many contributions as a soldier, bullwhacker, photographer, explorer, publisher, author, artist, and historian have left a lasting legacy.<sup>21</sup>

W. H. Jackson is best known as the first person to photograph the wonders of Yellowstone. His images adorned the parlors of millions of American households and aided in the effort to create the world's first national park.<sup>22</sup>

### **Robert Byington Mitchell**

Robert B. Mitchell was born in 1823 in Mansfield, Ohio. He studied law in Mount Vernon, Ohio then established a practice in Mansfield before heading off to fight in Mexican-American War. After the war, he returned to his law practice and in 1855 began a political career when he was elected mayor of Mount Gilead, Ohio.<sup>23</sup>

The following year he moved to Kansas where he served in the territorial legislature from 1857 until 1858 and as treasurer of the territory from 1859 until 1861.<sup>24</sup>

When the Civil War erupted, Mitchell was commissioned Colonel of the 2nd Kansas Volunteer infantry. He was later called to service in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Washington D.C. During the latter part of the war, he commanded Districts in Nebraska and Kansas.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *William Henry Jackson* 2006

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *A Civil War Biography, Robert Byington Mitchell.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

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

While in Nebraska, Mitchell ordered the establishment of Camp Shuman in 1864 to protect traffic along the Great Platte River Road between Julesburg and South Pass and also the nearby Scott's Bluff stage station. Later named Fort Mitchell in his honor, the post was abandoned after the Fort Laramie peace conference of 1867. The ground plan of Fort Mitchell consisted of a stockade with a sallyport, firing loopholes, and a sentinel tower. Today no trace of the Army fort remains; however, its location is known. The site is noted to the public by Nebraska Historical Society Marker 190 on State Highway 92 two miles west of present day, Scottsbluff, Nebraska. Mitchell Pass and the city of Mitchell, Nebraska, derive their names this military post.<sup>26</sup>

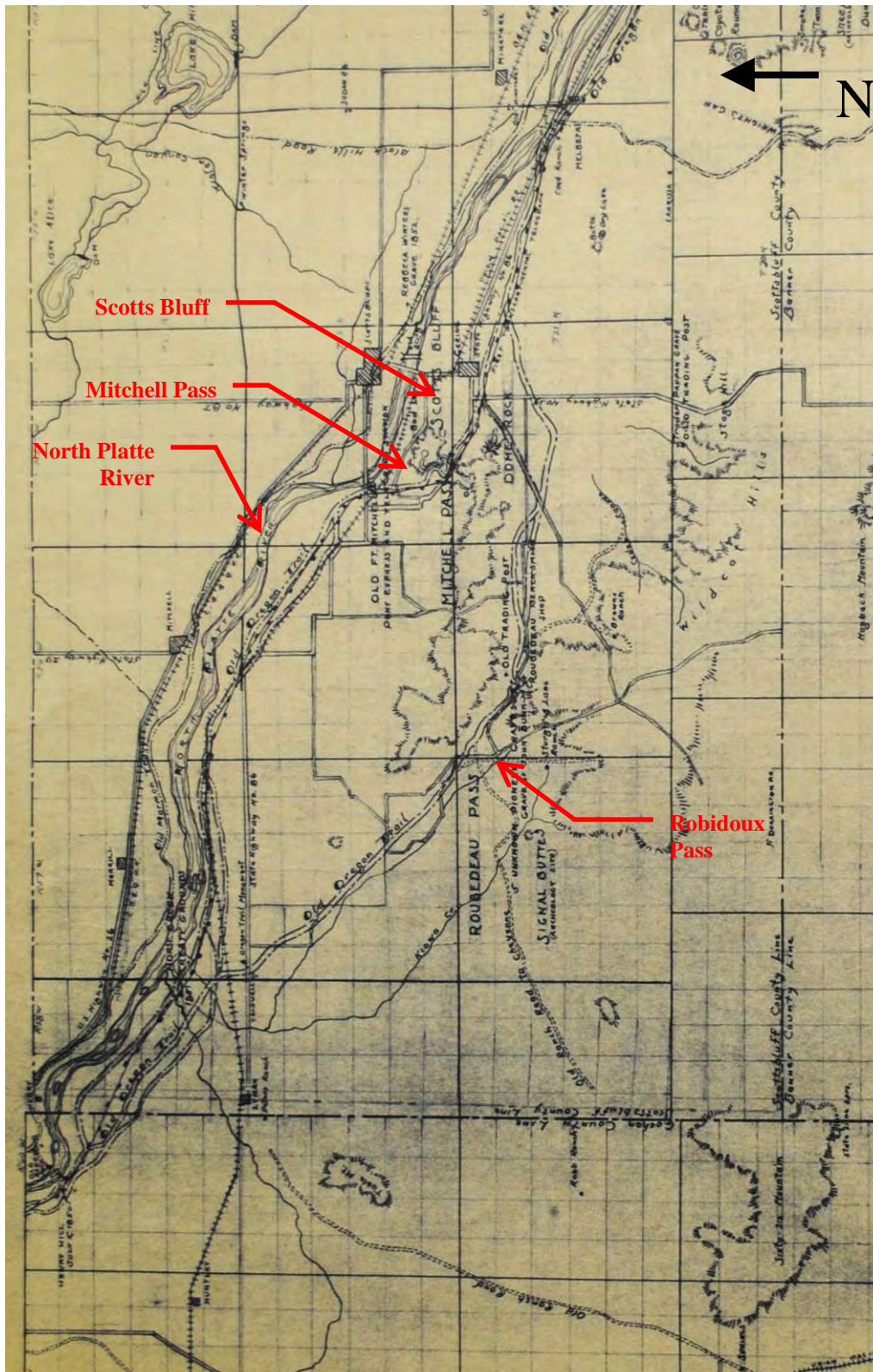
After serving in the military, Mitchell served as governor of the New Mexico Territory from 1866 to 1869 before moving to Washington D.C. He died in 1882 and was buried with full military honors in Arlington National Cemetery.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *Fort Mitchell, Nebraska* 2010

<sup>27</sup> *A Civil War Biography, Robert Byington Mitchell*

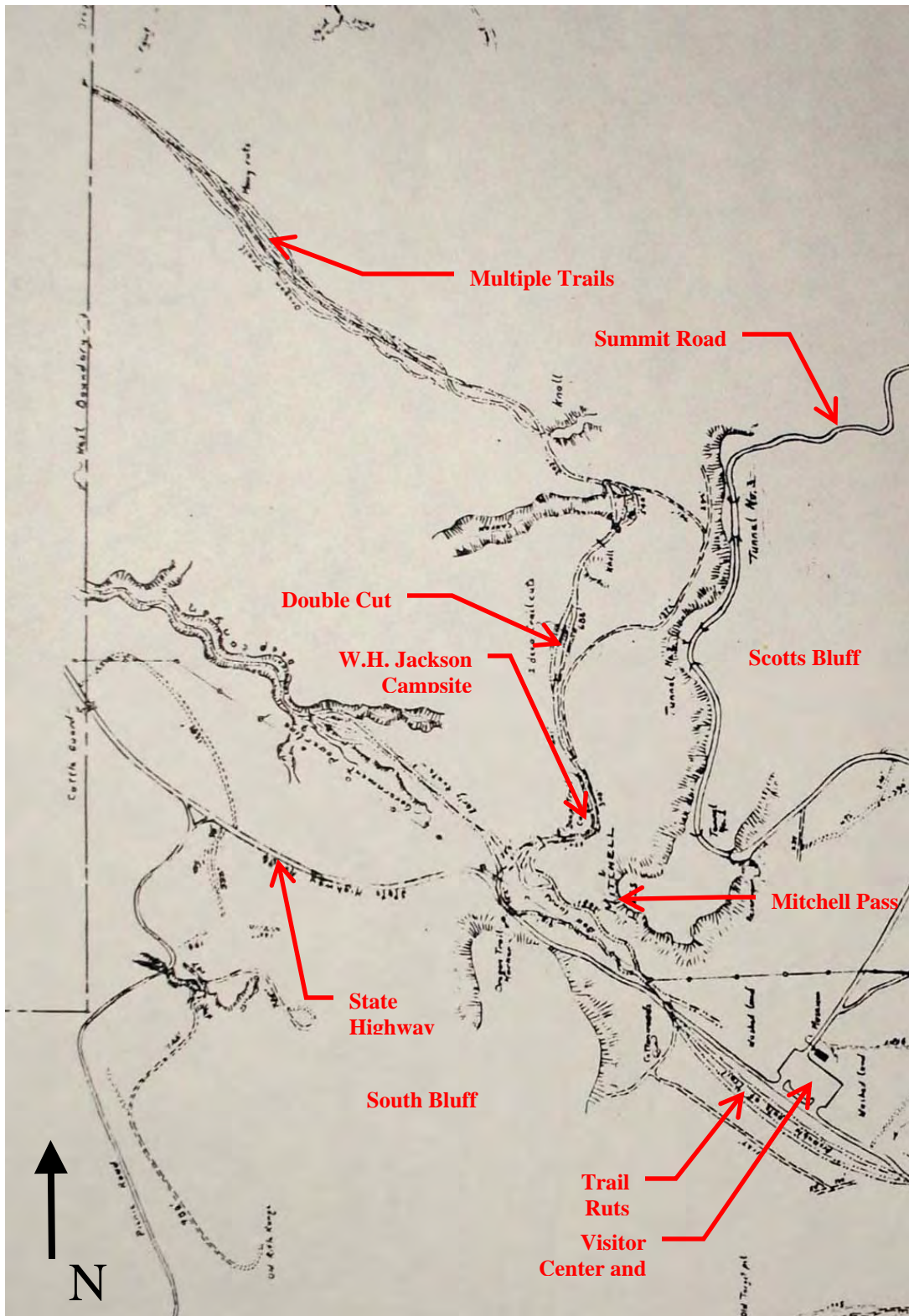
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Oregon Trail Ruts Landscape Study  
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**Figure 2 - 1.** Scotts Bluff Historic Sites and Trails: Sheet 2B (c. 1936)  
(source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0122.JPG)



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Oregon Trail Ruts Landscape Study  
and Environmental Assessment ■ 100% Report



**Figure 2 - 2.** Oregon Trail and Road Obliteration Plan (zoomed in on Mitchell Pass)  
(c. 1936) (source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0136.JPG)

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



**Figure 2 - 3.** Scotts Bluff National Monument (c. 1936) (source: SCBL Archives)  
(DSC\_0120.JPG)



[illegible]

Courtesy, Oregon Trail Museum Association  
Scotts Bluff National Monument

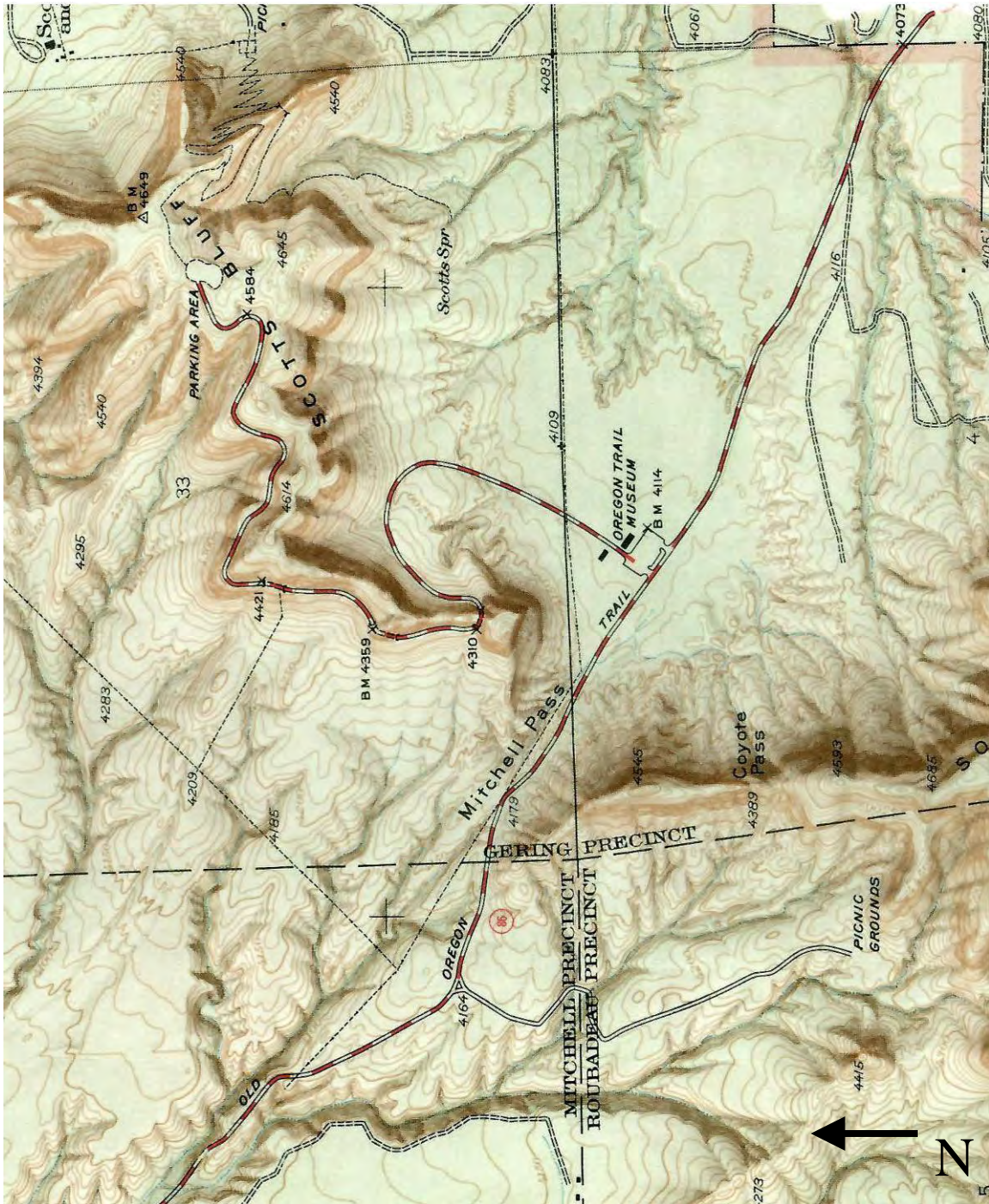
Data Prepared by M. J. Mattes, 1936.  
Drawn by C. W. Nichols, 1936.

Corrected and Redrawn by Robert Buchanan  
and Earl R. Harris, September, 1958.



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

279



**Figure 2 - 5.** Scotts Bluff USGS Survey-showing original State Highway Alignment (c. 1936) (source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0127.JPG)



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

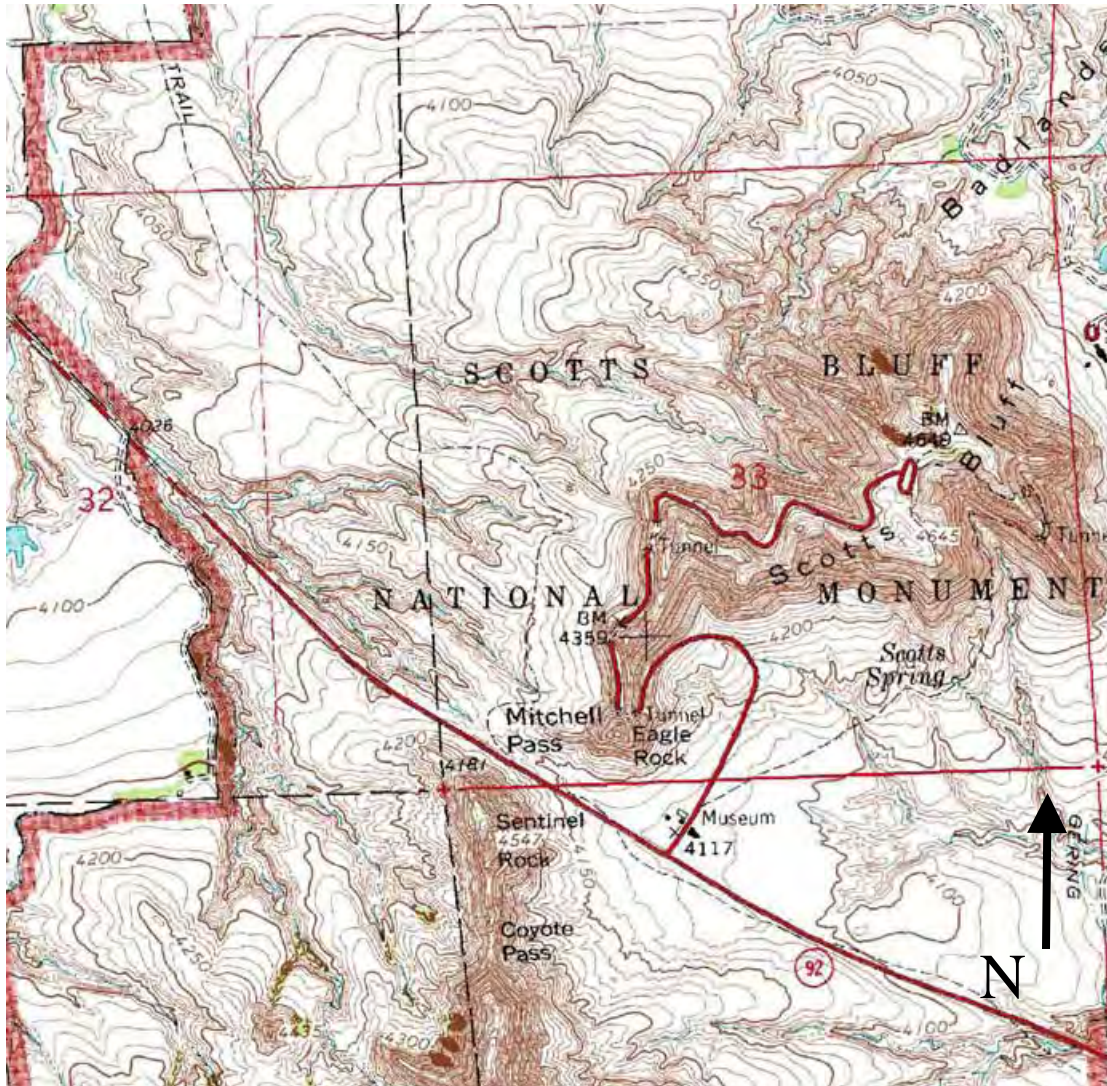


**Figure 2 - 6.** Old Oregon Trail Illustration (c. 1948) (source: SCBL Archives)  
(DSC\_0158.JPG)



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

287  
288



289  
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291  
292

**Figure 2 - 7.** Scotts Bluff USGS Survey-shows current county road Old Oregon Trail alignment (c. 1981) (source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0153.JPG)

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



**Figure 2 - 8.** W. H. Jackson watercolor depicting a wagon train through Mitchell Pass, looking east (painting c. 1930s) (source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0197.JPG)



**Figure 2 - 9.** View from headquarters area, looking west towards Mitchell Pass, before building construction (c. 1935) (source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0194.JPG)



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



**Figure 2 - 10.** Markers on Mitchell Pass with North Wall in background (c. 1935)  
(source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0203.JPG)

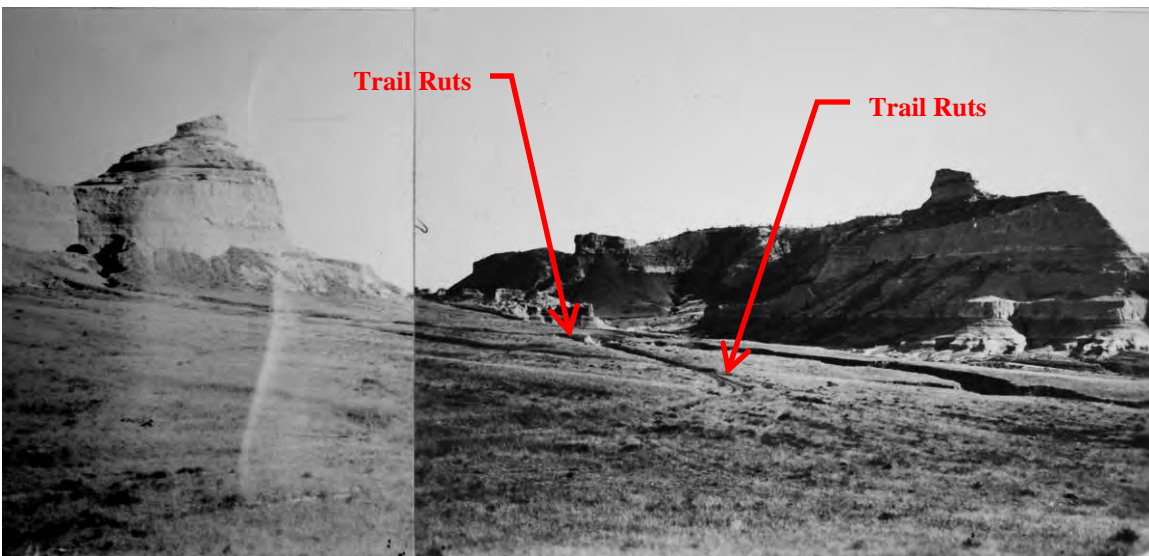


**Figure 2 - 11.** Mitchell Pass markers (c. 1936) (source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0199.JPG)

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



**Figure 2 - 12.** Oregon Trail, trough below 1<sup>st</sup> tunnel (c. 1936) (source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0251.JPG)



**Figure 2 - 13.** Panorama of trail on west side of Mitchell Pass (c. 1936) (source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0254.JPG)



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



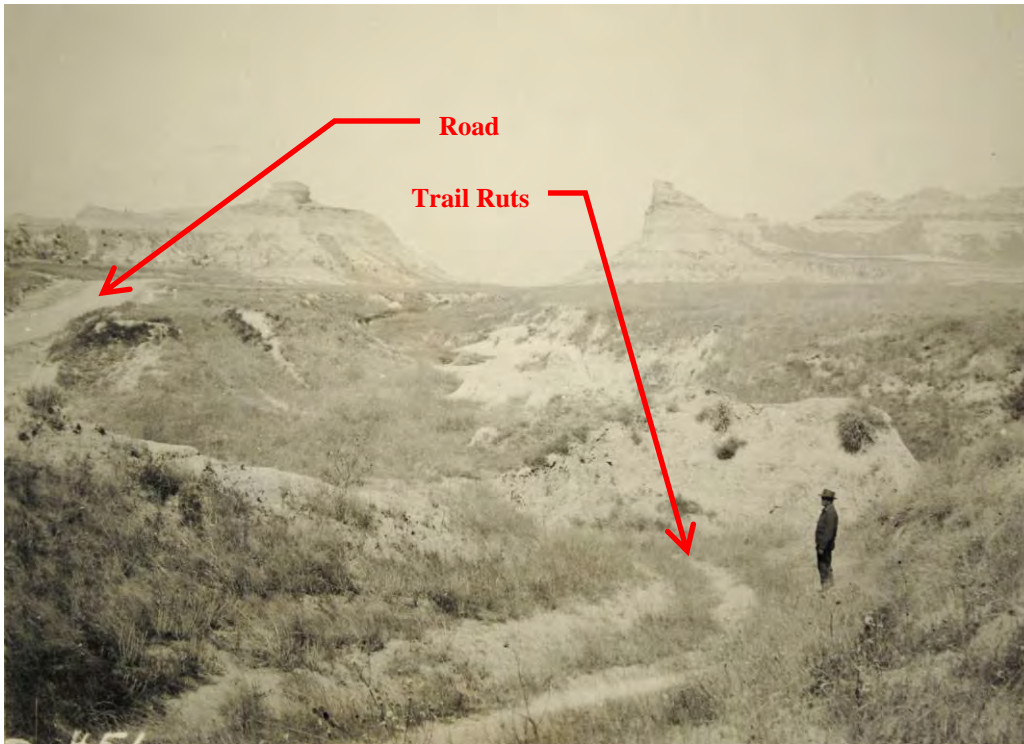
**Figure 2 - 14.** View from double cut, west towards Fort Mitchell (c. 1936)  
(source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0253.JPG)



**Figure 2 - 15.** William H. Jackson campsite (c. 1938) (source: SCBL Archives)  
(DSC\_0267.JPG)

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

323



324  
325  
326  
327

**Figure 2 - 16.** View to west toward Mitchell Pass from eastern portion of monument (c. 1939) (source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0210.JPG)



328  
329  
330

**Figure 2 - 17.** View of Oregon Trail cut below 1st tunnel (c. 1939) (source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0216.JPG)



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

331



332

333

334

335

**Figure 2 - 18.** Reclamation power line- view looking west through Mitchell Pass. Oregon Trail in foreground (c. 1939) (source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0258.JPG)



336

337

338

339

**Figure 2 - 19.** View from Oregon Trail looking east below 1st tunnel (c. 1940) (source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0223.JPG)

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



**Figure 2 - 20.** Mitchell Pass View to west, from top of Dome Rock (Trail ruts not visible in this photo) (c. 1940) (source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0202.JPG)



**Figure 2 - 21.** View of Oregon Trail on east side of Mitchell Pass looking west (c. 1941) (source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0220.JPG)



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



**Figure 2 - 22.** View from Oregon Trail near Mitchell Pass looking east (c. 1941)  
(source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0221.JPG)



**Figure 2 - 23.** Boy Scouts on Oregon Trail (c. 1941) (source: SCBL Archives)  
(DSC\_0228.JPG)

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

354



355

356

357

358

**Figure 2 - 24.** Oregon Trail visitors at double cut below 2<sup>nd</sup> tunnel, looking west (c. 1941)  
(source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0225.JPG)



359

360

361

362

363

**Figure 2 - 25.** Oregon Trail visitors east of double cut looking west (c. 1941)  
(source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0226.JPG)



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



**Figure 2 - 26.** View of Oregon Trail near Mitchell Pass, looking southwest (c. 1950)  
(source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0274.JPG)



**Figure 2 - 27.** Reclamation power line with Oregon Trail Ruts (c. 1956) (source: SCBL  
Archives) (DSC\_0256.JPG)

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



**Figure 2 - 28.** Conestoga Wagon on Oregon Trail near Mitchell Pass, looking east (c. 1961)  
(source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0173.JPG)



**Figure 2 - 29.** Oregon Trail Ruts looking eastward with Dome Rock in distance (c. 1969)  
(source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0241.JPG)



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

378



379  
380  
381  
382

**Figure 2 - 30.** Erosion of Oregon Trail ruts, east of Mitchell Pass (c. 1970) (source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0185.JPG)



383  
384  
385

**Figure 2 - 31.** Erosion of Oregon Trail ruts, east of Mitchell Pass (c. 1970) (source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0185.JPG)

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



**Figure 2 - 32.** End of surface path and beginning of visible Oregon Trail ruts. Interpretive sign and rest bench on left. (c. 1970) (source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0261.JPG)



**Figure 2 - 33.** View to east from Oregon Trail ruts, power line and Dome Rock and Monument headquarters in background (c. 1970) (source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0263.JPG)



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



**Figure 2 - 34.** Sod planted in ruts to stop erosion (c. 1971) (source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0270.JPG)



**Figure 2 - 35.** Erosion along trail (c. 1971) (source: SCBL Archives) (DSC\_0283.JPG)

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

**d. Historic Landscape Chronology**

The chronology documents the evolution of the emigrant trail from the time the Oregon Trail was improved on Mitchell Pass to the present. The chronology builds upon that presented in the CLI.

Year	Event	Description
1851 AD	Moved	Path of Oregon Trail moved from Robidoux Pass to Mitchell Pass
1860 AD	Established	Inauguration of Pony Express through Mitchell Pass. Pony Express used Mitchell Pass from April 1860-October 1861.
1861 AD	Installed	Telegraph wires installed through Mitchell Pass
1862 AD	Established	Route of overland coach to California traveled through Mitchell Pass
1864-1867 AD	Established	Fort Mitchell – Military Post site on the North Platte River bend northwest of Scotts Bluff
1866 AD		W.H. Jackson camps at Mitchell Pass
1869 AD	Abandoned	Completion of the Transcontinental Railroad marked the end of the Oregon-California Trail as a major transcontinental transportation route
1912 AD	Installed	The first interpretive marker was placed in Mitchell Pass by the State of Nebraska.
1919 AD	Established	Scotts Bluff National Monument proclaimed by President Woodrow Wilson on December 12 <sup>th</sup>
1929 AD	Constructed	State Highway 92 (also known as State Highway 86 and currently as the county road Old Oregon Trail) over Mitchell Pass constructed



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

Year	Event	Description
1933-1934 AD	Planted	Workers began seeding and planting at key points in the Monument to control erosion (may have affected the Oregon Trail)
1935 AD	Built	Oregon Trail Museum completed
1935 AD	Constructed	CCC constructed picnic grounds west and south of Mitchell Pass, built road from Oregon Trail Museum to camp, installed water system, fenced monument boundaries, and continued seeding and planting operations. (utilities crossed Oregon trail ruts)
1936 AD	Installed	The first interpretive marker was installed at W.H. Jackson's campsite.
1937-1940 AD	Constructed	CCC began realigning, grading and filling and seeding State Highway 86 (became Highway 92 in 1961) in Mitchell Pass area. Work was completed by Works Progress Administration.
1949-1956 AD	Planted	48,634 junipers and ponderosa pine were planted throughout the monument under the Soil and Moisture Conservation Program.
1953 AD	Constructed	Original State Highway 86 (county road Old Oregon Trail) was realigned through Mitchell Pass.
1955 AD	Constructed	State Highway 86 (county road Old Oregon Trail) was paved from the east monument boundary to Gering
1958 AD	Constructed	Portions of the Oregon Trail were paved from the Visitor Center to the W.H. Jackson Campsite.
1959 AD	Installed	The original sign marking W.H. Jackson's Campsite was removed and replaced with a new sign.
1966 AD	Established	Scotts Bluff National Monument was included on the National Register of Historic Places on October 15, 1966.

**Scotts Bluff National Monument  
Oregon Trail Ruts Landscape Study  
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<b>Year</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Description</b>
1967 AD	Constructed	A new foot trail opened that runs for ½ mile from the visitor center to the W.H. Jackson Campsite.
1978 AD	Established	Congress designates the Oregon Trail a National Historic Trail
1983 AD	Constructed	Overhead utility lines that served the Visitor Center from the east were removed and replaced underground
2007	Constructed	The “Old Oregon Trail” highway through Scotts Bluff National Monument was resurfaced and turned over to the County
Date Unknown	Installed	Boy Scouts install markers marking trail

408