

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

Character Area D1

Character Area D1 is located northwest of Character Area B2, at the northwestern edge of the monument. This area is typified by braided and vegetated trail rut resources that are visually indistinct and difficult to discern in the field. The trail rut resources in a portion of this area have been obliterated by past agricultural practices. The area is rarely used by visitors and there are no walking trails or visitor amenities.

Existing Condition

- The trail topography within this area is mostly flat. Ridges flank both sides of the trail corridor.
- The views and vistas of Scotts Bluff, South Bluff and beyond are prevalent throughout the character area.
- Multiple trail ruts are indistinct and only intermittently visible on the west end of the character area.
- The topography includes a bermed slope along the southwest portion of the Character Area where a fence was previously installed (the fence has been removed) to define an agricultural field prior to NPS acquiring the land.

Analysis

Trail Rut Resource

- The emigrant trail ruts in Character Area D1 are approximately 60% Class 3 (verified original trail) and are contributing.
- Approximately 40% of the emigrant trail ruts in this area are Class 5 (approximate original trail) and are non-contributing.
 - The trail rut resources in the Class 5 area were obliterated by private agricultural practices prior to land acquisition by the monument.
- The trail is more difficult to discern than trails in Character Areas A, B and C due to: vegetation encroachment; sedimentation; the braided character of the trail ruts; non-use; and agricultural practices.
- The multiple trails in this area provide an example of how emigrant wagons spread out in flatter topography on the west side of Mitchell Pass.
- The trail ruts in this area are more difficult to visibly discern than in Character Areas A and B1 due to vegetation encroachment, the braided nature of the trails and non-

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use. While the growth of vegetation (grasses) helps stabilize soils and reduce erosion, it also reduces the visibility of trail ruts, primarily in the flatter sections.

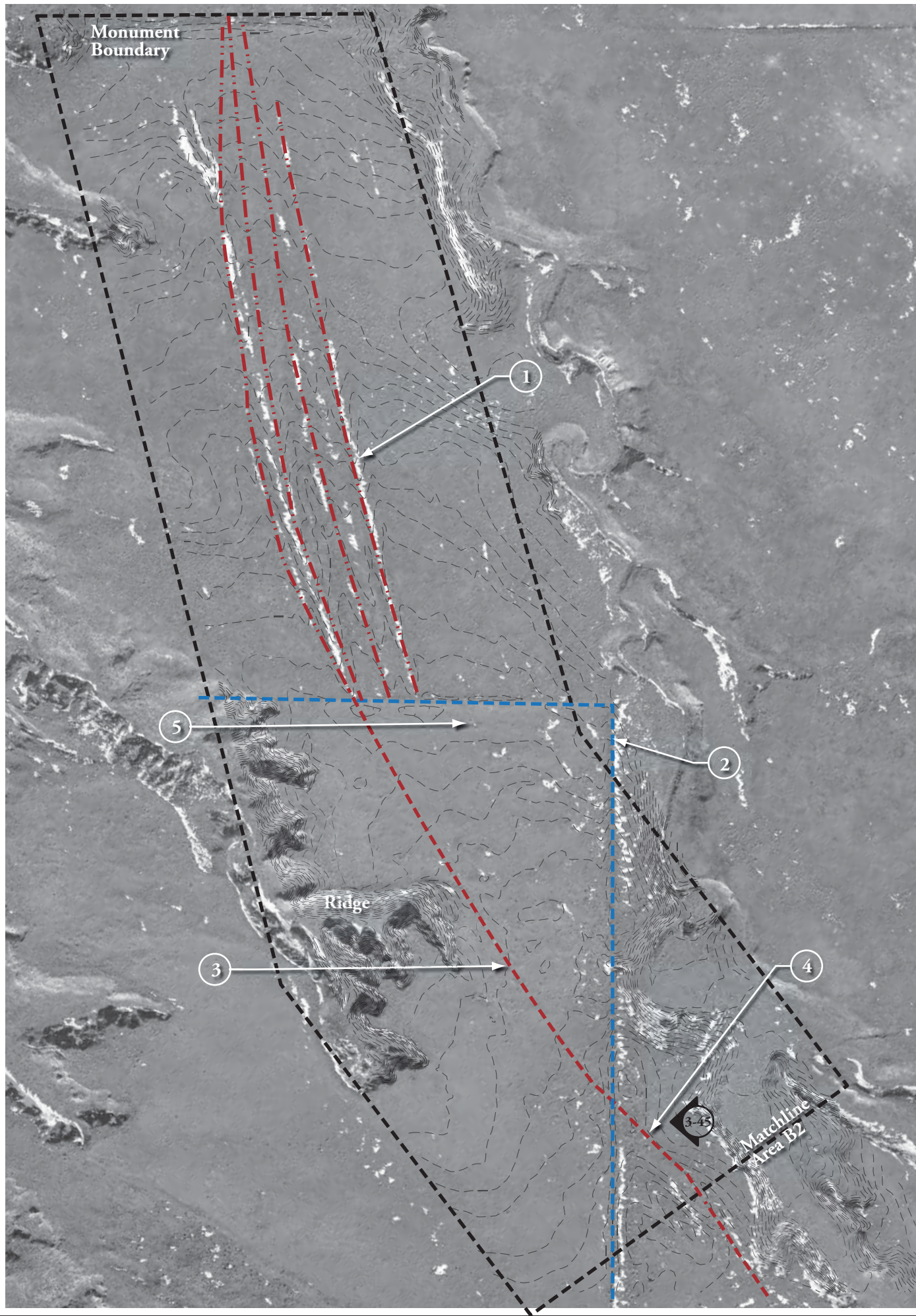
- According to monument staff, Character Area D1 receives only occasional visitor use.

Visitor Experience

- It is unlikely most visitors would reach this character area during their visit to the monument.
- Visitors who visit this area have an opportunity to experience the views of Scotts Bluff and South Bluff to the east and the open landscape to the west.



Figure 3 - 45. Character Area D1 looking west (2009) (MBD DSC_0111.JPG)



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 **Multiple Trail Ruts Through Flat Topography - Class 1 (Unaltered Original Trail)**
- ② **Remnant Fenceline Topography**
- ③ **Trail Ruts Location - Class 5 (Approximate Original Trail)**
- ④ **Trail Ruts Location - Class 3 (Verified Original Trail)**
- ⑤ **Prior Agricultural Land within Remnant Fence Topography Post Oregon Trail**
- ▲**3-1** **Photo Reference Figure #**

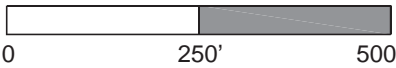


FIGURE 3 - 46		TITLE OF PROJECT OREGON TRAIL RUTS LANDSCAPE STUDY ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT	
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR		DRAWING TITLE CHARACTER AREA D1 - EXISTING CONDITIONS	
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE SCOTTS BLUFF NATIONAL MONUMENT		NAME OF PARK SCOTTS BLUFF NATIONAL MONUMENT	
REGION MIDWEST	COUNTY SCOTTS BLUFF	STATE NEBRASKA	

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699 **Character Area D2**

700 Character Area D2 is located to the east of Character Area C, at the eastern edge of
701 the monument. Trail rut resources are visible only intermittently in this area and it is not
702 often frequented.

703 **Existing Condition**

- 704 ▪ The trail topography within this area is mostly flat, except for one large ravine
705 running in a southwest to northeast direction.
- 706 ▪ The view of Mitchell Pass, Scotts Bluff and South Bluff are visible at the monument
707 entry along county road Old Oregon Trail and from the Oregon Trail.
- 708 ▪ County road Old Oregon Trail has covered significant sections emigrant trail
709 resources in this character area.
- 710 ▪ Trail rut resources are located both north and south of the county road Old Oregon
711 Trail where the trail crosses the ravine.
- 712 ▪ The contemporary improvements in this area are limited to compatible wooden trail
713 markers and a wayside at the monument east boundary with an interpretive panel.

714 **Analysis**

715 **Trail Rut Resource**

- 716 ▪ The majority of the emigrant trail ruts in Character Area C are primarily Class 5
717 (approximate original trail). The location of the emigrant trail in these sections is only
718 known approximately from historic maps and photographs and is not visible. If the
719 resources are extant under the road (further investigation is needed) they would
720 contribute to the significance of the historic landscape.
- 721 ▪ The sections of the trail that cross the ravine are Class 1 (unaltered original trail) and
722 are easily discernable.
- 723 ▪ Figure 3-47 shows an overhead electric line in the background. The presence of
724 these lines in the area of the trail ruts diminishes the original views experienced by
725 the emigrants as they approached Mitchell Pass from the east.
- 726 ▪ Vegetation encroachment has occurred throughout the trail. Although the
727 vegetation encroachment helps stabilize soils and reduce erosion, the vegetation in
728 the flatter topography obscures the trail ruts; however, it does not diminish the
729 overall trail experience.

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Visitor Experience

- The most prominent features visible to visitors are the ruts through the ravine as seen in Figure 3-47 and Figure 3-48.
- Visitors who visit this area have an opportunity to experience the approach of Mitchell Pass and the views Scotts Bluff and South Bluff in much the same way emigrants did.
- This area receives little foot traffic and visitation is primarily limited to the interpretive wayside.



Figure 3 - 47. Ruts through ravine at the east end of Character Area D2 (2009)
(MBD DSC_0062.JPG)

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Figure 3 - 48. Character Area D2 looking west (2010) (MBD DSC_00161.JPG)
Below - Oregon Trail around ravine (c. 1941) (DSC_0210.jpg) (source: SCBL archives)

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Figure 3 - 49. Character Area D2 *Above* – Oregon Trail ruts remnant – east monument boundary (2010) (MBD DSC00158.JPG); *Below* - Oregon Trail ruts and Mitchell Pass – east boundary (c. 1956) (DSC_0244.jpg) (source: SCBL archives)

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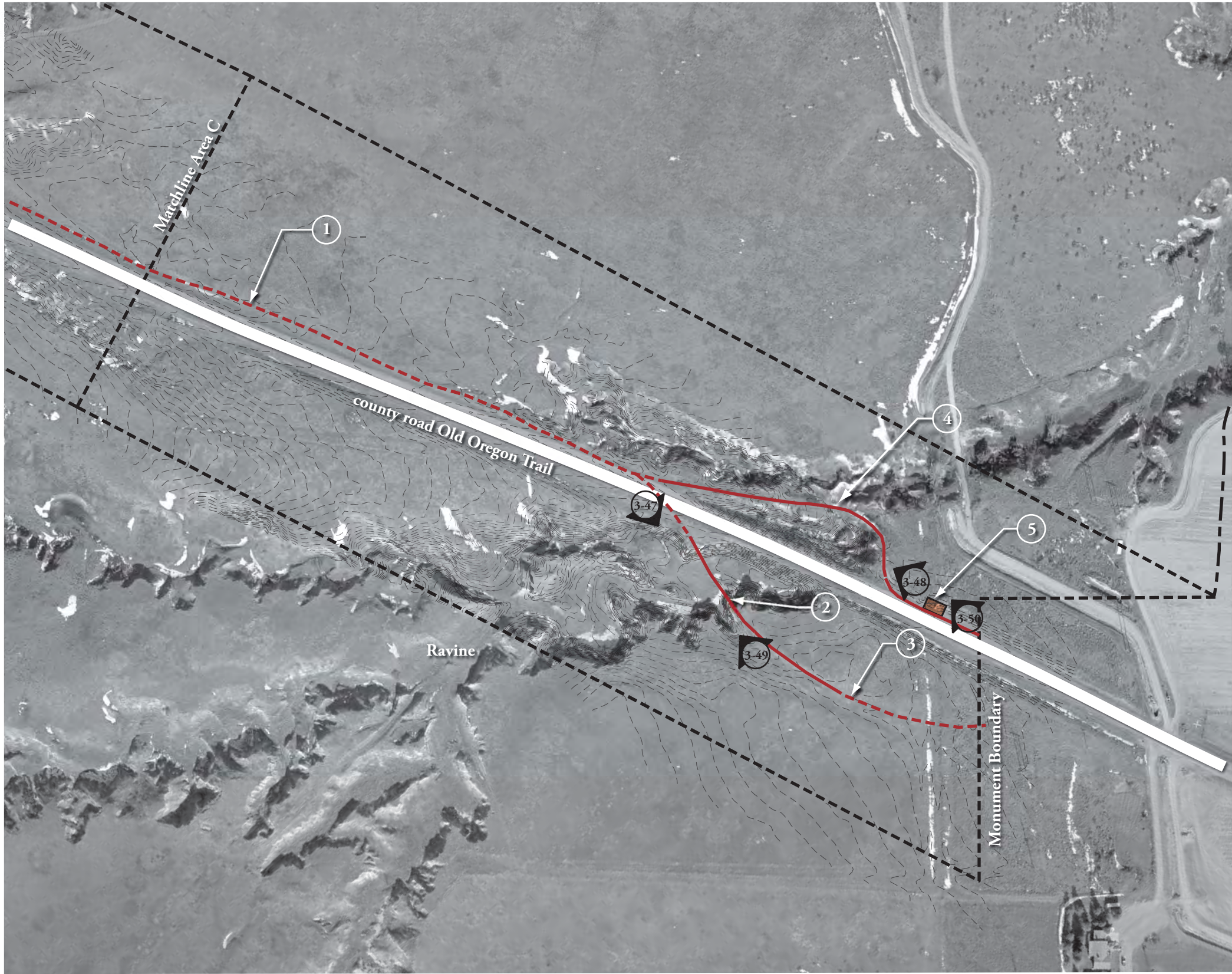
Table 5: Character Area D2 - Small Scale Features

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Figure #</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Condition</i>	<i>Contributing/Non-contributing</i>
Boy Scout Trail Marker	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>
Monument Entrance Sign	3-50	Stucco monument sign “Scotts Bluff National Monument” located at the east Monument boundary	Good	non-contributing compatible <i>outside period of significance</i>
Wayside with interpretive panel	n/a	A vehicular pull-off/wayside is located at the east monument boundary adjacent to the monument entrance sign. The wayside has a paved asphalt path that extends to a view of the bluffs and Mitchell Pass and includes an interpretive panel with information about the Oregon Trail.	Good	non-contributing compatible <i>outside period of significance</i>

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Figure 3 - 50. Monument entrance sign at east entry in Character Area D2 (2009)
(MBD DSC_0064.JPG)



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 Trail Ruts Location - Class 5 (Approximate Original Trail)
- ② Trail Ruts Location - Class 1 (Unaltered Original Trail)
- ③ Trail Ruts Location - Class 5 (Approximate Original Trail)
- ④ Trail Ruts Location - Class 1 (Unaltered Original Trail)
- ⑤ Scotts Bluff National Monument Entrance Sign
- ▲³⁻¹ Photo Reference Figure #

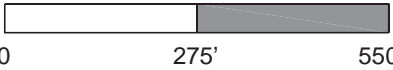


FIGURE 3 - 51		TITLE OF PROJECT OREGON TRAIL RUTS LANDSCAPE STUDY		
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR		DRAWING TITLE CHARACTER AREA D2 - EXISTING CONDITIONS		
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE SCOTTS BLUFF NATIONAL MONUMENT		NAME OF PARK SCOTTS BLUFF NATIONAL MONUMENT		
REGION MIDWEST	COUNTY SCOTTS BLUFF	STATE NEBRASKA		

