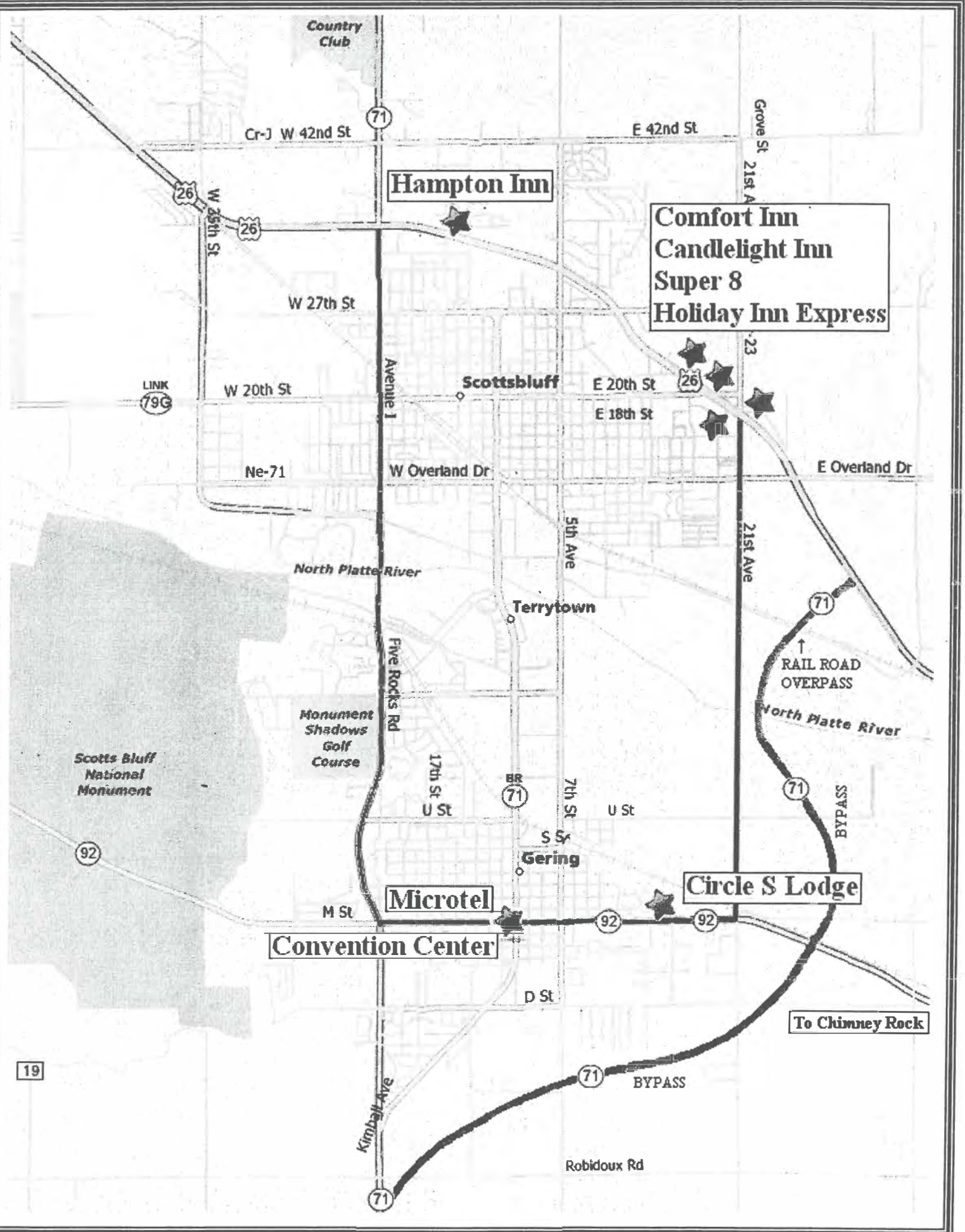


JOURNEY ALONG THE GREAT PLATTE RIVER ROAD



OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION
25TH CONVENTION
GERING/SCOTTSBLUFF
NEBRASKA



Hampton Inn

**Comfort Inn
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Scottsbluff

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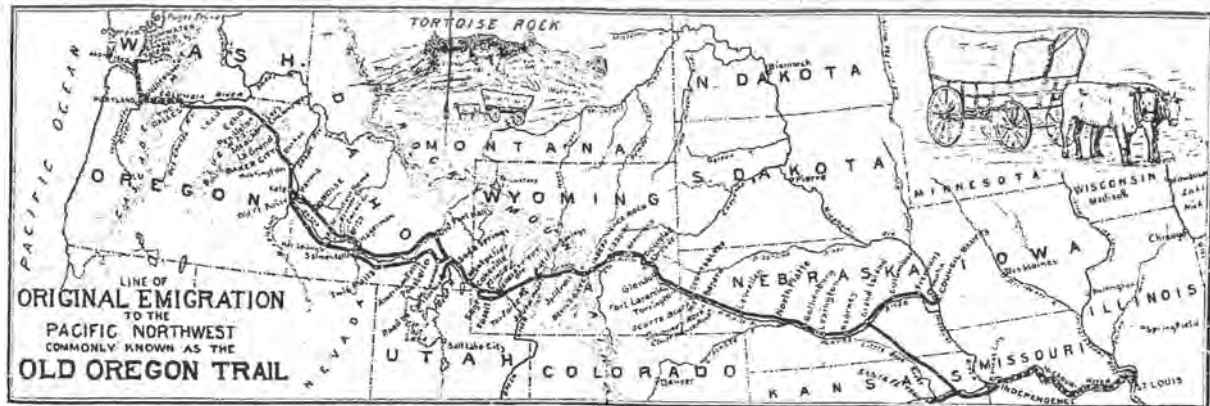
Circle S Lodge

Convention Center

To Chimney Rock

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Welcome

Welcome to OCTA's 25th Annual Convention in Gering/Scottsbluff, Nebraska. Be prepared to see incredible landscapes as recorded in so many emigrant diaries. The air is clean and the sunsets amazing.

Gering is a town of 8,000 located three miles south (across the Platte River) of Scottsbluff, pop. 15,000. Together, these two towns offer the amenities of big city living in a small, friendly, and beautiful setting. The Gering Civic Center is the convention headquarters. In our neck of the woods, we don't really have traffic, but we do have coal trains. Lots & lots of coal trains. For some of you waiting for coal trains may be fun at first, however the expressway with its miracle of engineering – the overpass – will let you view the trains, blinking lights, and crossing arms without having to participate in the wait.

August weather in western Nebraska is usually hot and dry. If you are used to high humidity, you are in for a pleasant surprise. The nights can get quite chilly so be sure to bring a jacket. Mosquitoes can be ferocious. Bring mosquito spray – with Deet! This is also rattlesnake country although sightings are rare (they are much more frightened of you than you are of them, believe it or not!) Many of our events are planned for the great outdoors, so please be casual and comfortable.

For your entire convention stay, you will be directly on or within a stone's throw of the emigrant trails. It is easy to imagine the mighty Platte as it was in the mid 1800's. There are groves of trees along the river now and buffalo have been replaced by cattle. Standing in the shadow of Court House & Jail Rocks, the Chimney, or Scott's Bluff still inspires "pioneer awe". We know you will love it as much as we do.

With the Oregon, California, Mormon trails and with traffic to the gold fields of Colorado, Montana, and South Dakota as well as freighting, Pony Express and military traffic, remember that in Nebraska, you are NOT in the middle of nowhere, YOU ARE IN THE MIDDLE OF EVERYWHERE!

Thank you,

2007 Convention Committee

Joe and Lois Fairfield

Art and Billie Johnson

Jolene Kaufman

Judie Moorehouse

Barb Netherland

Loren Pospisil

Bill and Nancy Petersen

Marge and Dyke Waitman

And Our Other Great Help

Dozens of Volunteers from our community

Scotts Bluff National Monument

Fort Laramie National Historic Site

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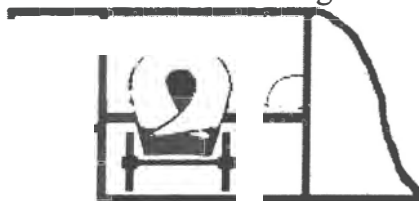
North Platte Valley Museum Board

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Scotts Bluff County Tourism

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THE PLATTE RIVER

The American Fur Trade of the Far West
Rivers and Lakes (part 5 chapter 3)

Hiram Martin Chittenden, 1903, Page 758-61

The neighborhood of the mouth of the Platte River early acquired and has always held great prominence as a commercial center. Many trading establishments and two or three military posts have been built here and now two flourishing cities with numerous smaller towns have taken their place. The situations of these several establishments were a little above the mouth of the Platte, but it was undoubtedly the junction of that stream with the Missouri which controlled their location. The local trade here was principally with the Omahas, Iowas, Otoes, and Pawnees, in addition to which there was an extensive outfitting trade for expeditions to Oregon and the Far West.

The mouth of the Platte River was, in these early days, the division point between the upper and lower Missouri. So important a landmark was it then considered that the voyageurs came to treat it as the equator of the Missouri, and it was a regular thing to subject the uninitiated to the rude jokes which are familiar to the navigator upon the high seas as an incident of crossing the line.

Of all the tributaries of the Missouri the Platte is the most remarkable and interesting, and is surpassed in size, though not in length, by the Yellowstone alone. The extreme length of the Platte is about a thousand miles. Its two branches, the North and South, rise respectively in North and South Parks of the state of Colorado. The North Fork flows nearly north into Central Wyoming, where it turns to the east by a gradual curve, passing through a sublime and beautiful cañon of red sandstone, when, gently turning to the right, it takes a southeasterly course into the state of Nebraska. The South Fork descends abruptly from the mountains in an easterly direction and then flows north for a considerable distance along their eastern base, past the site of the city of Denver, after which it turns to the northeast and joins the larger fork at the site of the modern town of North Platte in Nebraska. Thence the united streams pursue an easterly course to the Missouri River.

The principal tributaries of the North Fork are the Sweetwater and the Laramie rivers. The Sweetwater joins the main river where the latter makes its great bend to the east. It is a very notable stream in that its course was followed by the Old Oregon Trail from Independence Rock near its mouth to South Pass at its source. The Laramie was an important stream in the fur trade era, for near its mouth were the trading establishments of Fort John and Fort Platte, which were later succeeded by Fort Laramie, the most famous military post on the frontier.

The South Fork of the Platte received many tributaries from the mountains, among them the Big Thompson, the St. Vrain, and the Cache à la Poudre. The locality of the mouths of these streams was likewise important in fur trade history, there

Despite its uselessness as a stream the Platte has won a permanent place in the history of the West. If boats could not navigate its channel, the "prairie schooner" could sail along its valley...

The name Platte is characteristic and arises from the extremely shallow character of the stream. It use dates from 1739. In that year two brothers, Mallet, with six companions undertook to reach Santa Fe from a point on the Missouri somewhere near the present site of Sioux City. They left the river on the 29th of May and arrived at the Platte June 2. (*"Le 2 Juin ils tombèrent sur une rivière qu'ils nommèrent la Rivière Platte."* De Margry.) The party ascended the main stream and the South Fork to the mountains and reached Santa Fe on the 22nd of July.

having been no fewer than three trading posts established there.

The Platte proper is one of the most extraordinary of rivers. Its fall is very rapid, and its bed being composed of fine sand, one would expect that the rapid current would erode a deep channel through it. No such result, however. The broad bed of the river stands almost on a level with the surrounding country, while the water flows back and forth in such sinuous and irregular courses as to increase in a marked degree the length of the channel. The sand washed up in one place is dropped in another and the bed is built up as fast as it is cut down. Thus it results that so unresisting a material as fine sand withstands the action of the current better than a harder material, for it is certain that if this river with its heavy fall were flowing over solid rock it would have carved out a deep and cañon-like bed.

To see the Platte in all its glory one must see it during the spring floods. Then it spreads over its entire bed, upwards of a mile wide, and rivals the Mississippi itself in pretentiousness of appearance. But one has only to look a little closely to see through the thin veneer of this imposing appearance, and to discover, instead of a deep and powerful volume of water, sand bars innumerable, which show their glossy backs above the water and disclose the deceptive character of the stream. Irving very aptly characterized the Platte as "the most magnificent and the most useless of rivers," and a modern satirist has described it as a river "a thousand miles long and six inches deep."



The navigation of such a stream was of course largely out of the question. Bullboats, or flatboats made of buffalo hide, have descended from above Fort Laramie, but where one such attempt has succeeded, probably ten have failed. From the mouth of the Loup Fork of the Platte near where the Pawnee villages were located boats did frequently descend the short distance to the Missouri to trade with those Indians.

Despite its uselessness as a stream the Platte has won a permanent place in the history of the West. If boats could not navigate its channel, the "prairie schooner" could sail along its valley, where lay the most practicable route across the plains. It led the overland traveler by gradual and imperceptible ascents from near the level of the ocean to the very summit of the Continental Divide. Along it lay the old Oregon Trail, most famous of the overland highways, and along the main river in modern times was built the first transcontinental railroad.

THE TETON DAKOTA [Lakota]

The term Sioux is popularly applied to the Dakota Indians, a numerically large Native American group composed of several tribes, all speaking a language which falls under the still larger general classification Siouan. The Teton, or Western Dakota, were all living west of the Missouri River during the nineteenth century, and are well-known because of their major role in the Indian Wars which swept the Plains after 1850. The Oglala and Brule subgroups of the Teton Dakota lived in the area which is now northwestern Nebraska. Other Teton subgroups are also associated with the history of the state.

Early History

The Teton Dakota lived in the Plains for only a part of their known history. The earliest record of the Dakota places them in an area around the tip of Lake Superior in what is now Wisconsin and Minnesota. It was there that they were given the Sioux name which is a white people's word--a French-Canadian abbreviation of a Chippewa Indian word for enemy.

In their northern woodland homeland the Dakota occupied villages of gabled, bark-covered houses, using tipi-like portable dwellings only when hunting on the prairies to the west. They were woodland hunters, subsisting on deer, elk, bear, fish, wild seeds, roots, berries, and the wild rice typical of the region. They may have practiced limited agriculture; if so, corn and squash would probably have been their crops.

Hard-pressed by their Chippewa enemies who lived to the north and were armed with trade guns, the Dakota gradually migrated south and westward. The Teton were the vanguard of the movement and by 1700 were reported to be living in what is now southwestern Minnesota on the prairies between the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. They pushed aside the Omaha tribe in this early migration. At first they were not mounted, but horses were spreading throughout the Plains from Spanish settlements in the Southwest, and by 1742 the Teton had acquired ponies and their culture pattern became more and more that of horse-riding nomads. The first of the several Teton bands crossed the Missouri River about 1760 after a period of conflict with the Arikara, then a powerful agricultural village tribe living along the river in what is now South Dakota. Lewis and Clark met several Teton groups along the Missouri. The Teton extended their range westward to the Black Hills and thence to the Platte River Valley, drawn southward by the lure of trade at Fort Laramie. In the Central Plains they came into conflict with the Pawnee, a village tribe of central Nebraska which held the rich hunting lands of the Republican River Valley until the Sioux entered the region.

The territory controlled by the Teton Dakota extended from the Platte River northward nearly to the Canadian line and from the Missouri River on the east to the Big Horn Mountains on the west. The Oglala and Brule were the southern groups; the Miniconjou, Sans Arc, Blackfeet, Two Kettle, and Hunkpapa ranged to the north. There were about 10,000 Teton Dakota people in 1780.

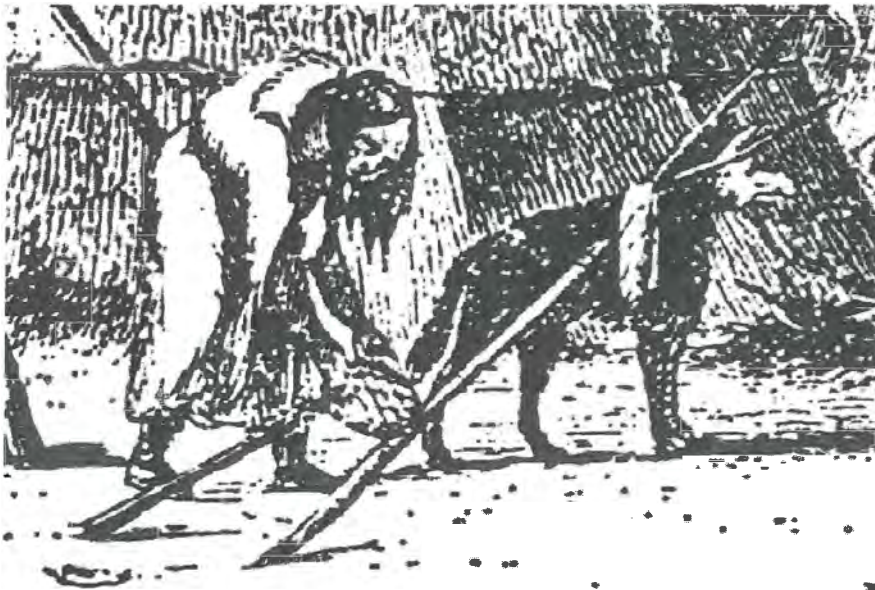
Economy

The economic basis of Teton Dakota culture was the bison or buffalo. Food, shelter, clothing, countless pieces of equipment and tools, as well as the luxuries of life, were derived from the vast herds of these animals. Horses were equally important, as highly trained animals were needed for hunting and war. European products were obtained by trade in exchange for hides and furs. The Teton followed a nomadic way of life, constantly moving camp as required for hunting and for obtaining fresh grass for their horse herds.

The Teton had many methods of hunting bison. Hunters on foot, disguised with wolf skins, would stalk the animals, or, during the winter, equipped with snowshoes, they would drive the bison into deep snow where they could be killed. Individuals hunting on horseback singled out an animal from the herd and killed it with a lance, bow and arrow, or rifle. Communal hunts were important. Stampeding buffalo were driven into enclosures, blind canyons or over cliffs. Groups of mounted horsemen encircled a herd and killed the animals while riding around it. In addition to the bison, the Sioux hunted many other plains animals: deer, elk, antelope, bears, and smaller mammals. They also gathered various edible roots and berries such as prairie turnips, chokecherries, wild plums, buffalo berries, wild strawberries, ground beans, and wild onions. They often made a nourishing food from crushed fruit and meat which we know as pemmican. The meat was usually that of the bison while the fruit might be plums, chokecherries, or buffalo berries.

Clothing

The buffalo robe, with hair attached, was used as an outer garment by both sexes. Men wore the breechcloth, moccasins, hip-length leggings and, on special occasions, poncho-like shirts. Women wore long sleeveless dresses made of two deer or elk hides. Later, short-sleeved dresses came into use. Moccasins and knee-length leggings were other items of feminine attire.



Tools and Equipment

Prior to white contact the Dakota made all of their tools and equipment from bone, stone, deer and buffalo hide, and other natural materials. However, they quickly adopted metal arrowheads and knives, iron kettles, guns, glass beads, cloth, and other items of white manufacture. Although they made every effort to obtain guns and ammunition, the bow and arrow remained a

principal weapon for hunting and war. Since they led a nomadic life the Teton had little use for breakable objects. They used many different types of soft-tanned and rawhide containers decorated with geometric designs fashioned with paint, dyed porcupine quills or glass beads. Handsome spoons and ladles were made of bison or mountain sheep horns. An amazing list of

objects were made from various parts of the buffalo ranging from glue made by boiling the hoofs to braided hair ropes.

Both pad and frame saddles were used by the Teton, and their saddlebags and blankets were often highly decorated. Bits and halters were seldom used. Instead, a simple lariat was looped around the horse's lower jaw. The travois was an important piece of transportation equipment. Tipi poles were tied to the saddle, crossing over the horse's shoulders. The lower ends of the poles dragged on the ground. Across the poles an oval framework was placed as a load-bearing platform. Tipi covers, household goods, supplies, sick or aged people, and children were carried on the travois.



The Village and Village Life

Teton camps consisted of several tipis, conical in form, made of tanned buffalo skins, and supported by a framework of long poles. Racks for drying meat were usually erected, and hides in the process of being tanned were staked out around the camp. During the winter there were many camps consisting of small groups of related families called bands, but during the summer the bands gathered in annual encampments at which time the vast camp was arranged in a circle, each band having its appointed place.

Women made and owned the tipis, and performed the many long and arduous tasks associated with village life. They butchered bison, prepared meals, preserved food for winter use,

gathered wood, water, edible roots and berries, and also cared for the very young children. Women made virtually all of the leather articles from clothing to tipis.

Men, on the other hand, devoted their time to hunting, making war, training and caring for their horses, making their personal equipment, and performing the bulk of the tribal and ceremonial duties.

Recreation

Games, feasts, story-telling, singing, and dancing were common Teton recreational activities. Games generally involved gambling. Some games, like the dice game and the moccasin guessing game, were games of chance, while others, hoop and pole, skinny, and archery, were games of skill. The Teton had a great variety of myths and legends explaining the origin of natural phenomena or social customs. Musical instruments included rattles, whistles, drums, and flutes, and there were special songs for ceremonies, dances, games, courting, mourning, and healing. Many dances were parts of religious ceremonies, but social dancing is an old Teton custom, too.

Social Customs

The Dakota classified their relatives in a manner different from ours; for example, instead of reserving the terms father and mother for their actual parents. Often individuals whom we would call uncle and aunt were called father and mother. Brothers showed their mutual regard by great affection and loyalty, but sisters and brothers showed respect by avoiding one another. A man and his mother-in-law also avoided direct contacts, and avoided speaking to each other. A man usually married the widow of his brother, and if a man had more than one wife, the women were likely to be sisters. The basis of marriage was mutual consent and a reciprocal exchange of property between families.

Government

The bands which camped together during the winter consisted of related families and sometimes unrelated families who chose to follow a leader of particular fame. There was no overall Teton government but each of the seven subgroups (Oglala, Brule, etc.) had its own camp circle. It was during the annual encampment that social organization and leadership beyond the band unit functioned. The Chiefs' Society was composed of men over forty years of age. This body elected its own members and Seven Chiefs who held office for life. A man's son or other relative was usually elected to take his place. The Seven Chiefs delegated their authority to the Four Shirt Wearers, and these men were the supreme councilors and executives, charged with the general welfare of the group. Perhaps the best-known member of the Shirt Wearers' Society was Crazy Horse. The rules for this honored group state that no member may take up arms without due deliberation, and each should use judgement and show justice to all. A member must also have been a successful warrior, and have a good reputation among his own people. Members of the group might have the privilege of wearing the shirts removed for failure to abide by the rules. These three bodies, in which office was held for life, provided permanent executives. Each year additional temporary officers were elected. There were the Four Wakicum, who organized and controlled the camp, one Herald, two Orderlies, and two Head Akicita. The Akicita appointed and led the other members of the Camp Police, whose duties were to control the group buffalo hunt, prevent or punish murder, and keep order in camp. There is a possibility that the office of chief was an idea introduced by white people.

Men's Societies

There were several types of men's societies among the Teton Dakota, each with its own songs, dances, equipment, and ceremonies. Akicita Societies were made up of men who might be called upon to perform camp police duties. Headmen's or Chiefs' Societies consisted of men

who did not perform police duty, and Warrior Societies included all able-bodied young men. Some of the latter groups required rigorous and dangerous duties in war. A man could belong to several societies at one time.

Women's Societies

Among the Oglala Dakota, at least, there were women's guilds of accomplished tipi cover makers and of skilled quill workers.

Ceremony and Religion

Teton religion was based on a belief in all-pervasive supernatural powers which dwelt in the sky, the earth, and the four directions. Individual warriors sought personal supernatural aid in a vision quest when they were young men. Sometimes, because of exposure, fasting, and self-torture, the young man had a dream in which he acquired a song, various taboos, and medicine objects from which he derived supernatural assistance. Certain individuals, medicine men, had personal supernatural powers, and practical cures were used by them in treating various types of illness and injury. The supernatural forces were invoked for group welfare during the Sun Dance and related ceremonies which were carried out during the annual encampment.

Honor and Wealth

Teton Dakota life was a man's world in which the warrior sought personal fame through achievements on the hunt and in war. Certain socially defined acts, such as being the first to touch an enemy in battle (known as counting coup), brought renown to a warrior. Such coups were remembered and recounted by the warrior during dances and ceremonies. The successful warrior also acquired wealth in the form of captured horses, and could enhance his prestige by distributing them among others in the camp. Dakota values of life might be expressed as honor, fortitude, generosity, wisdom, and honesty.

Burial

After death the body was placed in a tree or on a scaffold above the ground. A warrior's personal effects were buried with him, and often his horse was killed.

Communication

Many Teton people could speak other Plains Indian languages. For example, intermarriage with the Algonkian-speaking Cheyenne was not uncommon during the late nineteenth century, and this encouraged the use of that non-Siouan language. In addition to bilingual individuals who could act as interpreters, intertribal communication among all Plains tribes was accomplished through the medium of a well-developed universal sign language consisting of manual gestures. Signaling was also very important for hunting and war parties. Signals were made by riding horses in a particular fashion and with blankets, smoke, mirrors, or dust.

Late History

Early contacts between the Teton and white men were largely with fur traders. In the 1840's and 1850's ever increasing numbers of white settlers passed through the Sioux country along the Oregon Trail. The Teton were quick to recognize and fight this threat to their land. During the 1860's the Sioux fought Red Cloud's War which closed the Bozeman Trail through the Power River country. The wars of the 1870's were largely concerned with trespassing on the Dakota reservation as soldiers and miners violated previous treaties by entering the Black Hills. The conflicts of this period were marked by the Indian victories in 1876 at the Battle of Rosebud Creek where General Crook met defeat, and at the Battle of the Little Big Horn where General Custer's command was annihilated. However, severe defeats were suffered by the Dakota and their Cheyenne allies during the following winter, and all but those who followed Sitting Bull to Canada surrendered. In addition to military pressure the virtual extinction of the bison swept

away the economic basis of Plains Indian life, and the Dakota were forced to accept life on reservations. The government issued food and other supplies at reservations. The last conflict between the Teton Dakota and the U.S. Army occurred at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in December 1890. This event grew out of the Ghost Dance, a new belief briefly followed by the Dakota during a period when they were greatly discouraged by reservation life.

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Nebraska State Historical Society
Educational leaflet



*Annual rendezvous of Rocky Mountain trappers.
Original sketch in Oregon Trail Museum.
[Scotts Bluff National Monument]*

THE EARLY FUR TRADE PERIOD

http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/berkeley/brand1/brand1f.htm

The active exploration of the Scotts Bluff area began with the western extension of the fur trade into the upper Missouri and Rocky Mountain regions. With the trapper and trader came the beginnings of the history for western Nebraska. Although such Spanish and French traders as Lisa and Choteau had already been trading in the Missouri country, it remained for John Jacob Astor and his Pacific Fur Company (organized in 1810) to open up the rich fur country of the American Rockies and the Oregon country. A party, under W. P. Hunt, was sent overland to the mouth of the Columbia, and another party, on the "Tonquin," went by sea. Astoria was founded and the region claimed for America scarcely before some British traders appeared on the scene out of Canada. The Second War for Independence (1812-15) came on, and control was lost temporarily until an agreement between Britain and America made the Oregon country (42°-54°40' N. Lat., and west of the Continental Divide) open to joint exploitation.

Meanwhile, in 1812, an overland party had started east with dispatches for Astor. Robert Stuart, Ramsay Crooks, Robert McLellan, Joseph Miller, F. Leclerc, A. Veller, and B. Jones made up the party that laboriously followed up the Snake, crossed the Continental Divide at or near the famous South Pass, and started down the Sweetwater. The party lost their horses to some Indians while west of the Rockies, so they concluded to winter until foot or boat traveling should improve, as they had no idea of their location or the distance to St. Louis. Being disturbed by some Indians, the returning Astorians decided to attempt farther progress. They trudged along

down the North Platte (with most of their dunnage on the back of a poor old horse obtained from some friendly Snake Indians) until they had advanced many miles into the cold, desolate plains. Confronted by a lack of fuel and food, they retraced their steps "to a place where they had remarked there was a sheltering growth of forest trees and a country abundant in game. Here they would once more set up their winter quarters and await the opening of the navigation to launch themselves in canoes."



Trappers dancing around the camp

At this site the seven wanderers set up a new winter lodge, which was completed a few days after New Year's Day, 1813. They were able to kill an abundance of buffalo, and soon had an ample stock of winter provisions. Part of their leisure time they utilized in making two large dugout canoes, hoping to launch them with the spring flood of the river. On the 8th of March the river seemed sufficiently deep, and they departed from their winter's quarters. However, this initial attempt to navigate the upper Platte failed miserably, as the river expanded into a wide but extremely shallow stream, with many sandbars, and occasionally various channels. They got one of their canoes a few miles down it, with extreme difficulty, but at length had to abandon the attempt and resume their journey on foot with their faithful old pack-horse. Finally they got down to Grand Island, where a canoe was obtained from some Indians, and the remainder of the journey was made with comparative speed and ease.

This good direct trail between the settlements and the mountains now was forgotten for a number of years. During this time the Missouri Fur Company (motivated by Manuel Lisa, Joshua Pilcher, and other St. Louis men) and several minor companies had continued to work the upper Missouri region via the Missouri river. In 1822 William Ashley and Andrew Henry organized a

fur company that planned greater activity in the Rocky Mountains than ever before. An advertisement for men was answered by a group that developed such famous mountainmen as Jedediah Smith, William Sublette, and Jim Bridger. A series of disastrous encounters with Aricara and Blackfeet Indians in the upper Missouri region, 1822-1824, nearly wrecked Ashley financially, and turned the attention of his men to more southern fields. At this time occurred the much-disputed discovery or rediscovery of the South Pass by Provot and Bridger in 1823 or Smith and Fitzpatrick in 1824.

The concentration of Ashley's men in the Rocky Mountain area back of the Platte headwaters resulted in two innovations in the fur business. The various bands of trappers working for Ashley were given a time and place to meet a caravan which would bring needed supplies and trade goods, and would then take back to St. Louis the skins acquired by trapping and trade. This rendezvous and caravan system was initiated in the summer of 1825. At the same time the direct Platte overland route was put into effective use. In the summer of 1824 Fitzpatrick and two others had attempted to come down the Sweetwater and North Platte by bullboat, but had been wrecked and forced to cache their beaver skins. Then the three walked the entire distance in to Ft. Atkinson on the Missouri. There they found James Clyman, who had become separated from his party and had wandered the 600 miles in eighty days, arriving shortly before them. The party got horses, returned to the cache at Independence Rock, and was back at Ft. Atkinson in less than two months. Thus were furs first brought down to the Missouri by the Platte route. This route was probably along the north bank.

At first the pack animals used were horses, but soon mules became the favored animals because of their greater endurance. The caravan in 1826, under Ashley, W. Sublette, and Smith, was composed of 300 pack mules. This was Ashley's last trip into the mountains, as he sold his active interest to W. Sublette, Smith, and David Jackson in July of 1826. The pack trains of 1827, and 1828, and 1829 were of the accustomed type, but in the summer of 1830 W. Sublette led a caravan of 10 wagons (each drawn by 5 mules, 2 dearborns drawn by a mule each, 12 head of cattle, one milch cow, and 80 men mounted on mules.) This train went from St. Louis up the Platte to the head of the Wind River, being the first wagons to reach the Rocky Mountains north of the Santa Fe Trail. In 1827, however, Ashley had sent a party of 60 men, with a four-pound cannon on a carriage drawn by two mules, which went as far as the Great Salt Lake.

"Pack horses, or rather mules, were at first used; but in the beginning of the present year (1830), it was determined to try wagons; and in the month of April last, on the 10th day of the month, a caravan of ten wagons, drawn by five mules each, and two dearborns, drawn by one mule each, set out from St. Louis. We have eighty-one men in company, all mounted on mules; and these were exclusive of a party left in the mountains. Our route from St. Louis was nearly due west to the western limits of the State, and thence along the Santa Fe trail about forty miles; from which the course was some degrees north of west, across the water of the Kansas, and up the Great Platte river, to the Rocky Mountains, and to the head of the Wind river, where it issued from the mountains. This took us until the 16th of July, and was as far as we wished the wagons to go, as the furs to be brought in were to be collected at this place, which is, or was this year, the great rendezvous of the persons engaged in that business. Here the wagons could easily have crossed the Rocky Mountains, it being what is called the Southern Pass, had it been desirable for them to do so, which it was not for the reason stated. For our support, at leaving the Missouri settlements, until we should get into the buffalo country, we drove twelve head of cattle, beside a milk cow. Eight of these only being required for use before we got to the buffaloes, the others went on to the head of Winder river." (Letter of Jackson, Smith, and Sublette, page 21). On the

return trip the dearborns were left behind. Thus, in 1827 and 1830, the embryonic Oregon Trail (yet known only as the Great Platte route to the mountains) was blazed to a wheeled trace.

At the summer rendezvous of 1830, W. Sublette, Smith, and Jackson sold out to Fitzpatrick, Bridger, M. Sublette, Fraeb, and Gervais, who constituted the first Rocky Mountain Fur Company, properly so entitled. This company was dissolved in 1834, when it was temporarily reconstructed under Fitzpatrick, M. Sublette, and Bridger. However, these traders marketed through the American Fur Company, and after 1835 became employees of the latter company. During the five-year period, 1830-35, there ensued certain events and results that brought the first, or "romantic," period of the fur trade to an end.

In the period 1810-1830, fur trappers and traders had quite thoroughly explored and trapped the entire Rocky Mountain area from British Canada to the Mexican Interior Provinces. Most of the entrepreneurs (bourgeois, factor, artisan, or free trader) were Scotch, Irish, or of pioneer Virginia and Kentucky stock. The engages and free trappers were a motley crew of French-Canadian, American, Mexican, and mixed breeds. Scarcely a one hesitated to take one or more Indian wives, in the easy "mountaineer" style. Through such alliances tribal trade was attracted to the various individuals and outfits. By 1830 there was literally scarcely a locality or an Indian band that had not been contacted by the mountaineer trappers. This had resulted in a perceptible "trapping out" of the beaver country. By 1834 the reduction of the beaver output (the main fur shipped down the Platte route) was quite visible, and John Jacob Astor withdrew from the American Fur Company. At the same time the decree of "Dame Fashion" had shifted from beaver to silk hats.

Contributing agents to the trapping out of the beaver and the introduction of a new order in the fur business were the invasions of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company "preserves" by numerous independent outfits, such as those of Bonneville, Wyeth, Gant, and Bent-St. Vrain. Captain Bonneville, an army officer on leave, brought an elaborate wagon-train outfit into the mountains, in 1832, over the North Platte route by Scotts Bluff. In the same year Nathaniel Wyeth, a New England ice dealer, came into the mountains (by the same route) on a reconnaissance trip, which resulted in a serious business attempt in 1834. Accompanying Wyeth in 1834 were the first prospective permanent settlers of the Oregon country, Jason and Daniel Lee, Methodist missionaries to the Northwestern Indians. The competition among the many trapping and trading outfits, the need for central posts to which the fruits of methodic trapping and hunting might be brought and exchanged for commodities, and the prospect of regular movements across the mountains between the Missouri and the Columbia all led to the founding of permanent trading posts. Ft. William (Ft. Laramie), some 60 miles above Scotts Bluff, and Ft. Hall, on the upper Snake, were built in 1834. Although the annual rendezvous continued into its sixteenth year (1840), it decreased steadily in importance. There was to ensue a period, 1835-1848, when the westward movement of missionaries and colonists bound for the fertile valleys of Oregon and California filled the historic picture, and the reduced ranks of the trappers contributed as much to progress through guide service as by the production of beaver and buffalo skins for the eastern markets.

ALONG NEBRASKA PIONEER TRAILS

Nebraska State Historical Society Educational Leaflet

Many of Nebraska's highways today, including Interstate 80, are on or near routes used over 100 years ago by explorers, fur traders, covered wagon pioneers, and many others whose courage and labor laid the foundations for the American West. Nebraska has long been an important link in America's route to the West, and its pioneer trails indeed are "highways to history." A knowledge of these trails, which intertwine Nebraska with the history of the westward movement, will enliven one's travels in the state. The principal pioneer trails are outlined briefly in this leaflet. Additional sources of more detailed information are found in the bibliography.

THE MISSOURI RIVER WATERWAY OF EXPLORATION AND COMMERCE

When Lewis and Clark, the first Americans to explore the American West, set out on their epochal journey in the spring of 1804, they pointed their keelboats up the Missouri. For eight weeks they followed Nebraska's eastern border, the Missouri River, on their outward journey to the Pacific. At Council Bluff (not Council Bluffs, Iowa) near the present town of Fort Calhoun, they held an important council with the Oto and Missouri Indians. The river was their highway, but many of their camps were made in what is now Nebraska, and their journals contain the best available accounts of early Nebraska.

Americans were quick to take advantage of the new opportunities for trade which abounded in the vast area contained in the Louisiana Purchase. On their return trip from the Pacific coast in 1806, Lewis and Clark met eleven separate parties of traders and trappers coming up the Missouri River. Spanish explorers were the first white men known to have penetrated the central plains, and as late as 1800, just prior to the expedition of Lt. Zebulon Pike, they left a Spanish flag at the Pawnee village in Webster County. Lt. Pike's expedition was the first to cross the central area of the plains on a route south of the Republican River, and his reports called the land a vast desert.

In 1820 an expedition by an Army Engineer, Major Stephen H. Long, and a scientific party of 20 men followed the Platte River through Nebraska. Their reports confirmed earlier findings of Pike that the area was considered a desert wasteland. Stephen Long reported that Nebraska was not suited for cultivation or for people who depended upon agriculture for a living. The expedition's map-maker marked the area "The Great Desert," and this was noted on maps of the region until 1870.

In 1807, Manuel Lisa followed the Missouri on the first of his many fur-trading expeditions, and by 1813 he had established permanent headquarters near present-day Omaha. In 1811, Wilson Price and his party, representing John Jacob Astor, traveled the Missouri River bound for Astoria, located at the mouth of the Columbia River on the far Pacific.

Cantonment Missouri, north of present-day Omaha, was established in 1819 to provide protection for the fur trade. It was the first American military post west of the Missouri. In 1820 this fort was relocated on the original Council Bluff of Lewis and Clark, and the name was changed to Fort Atkinson. The fort continued in operation until June, 1827, when it was abandoned because the War Department felt that it was no longer needed to protect the fur trade.

The keelboat was the vessel commonly used by the early fur traders. It was a long craft, propelled by sails, oars, or a towline from the shore. These boats went up the river in the spring laden with merchandise to trade with the Indians, and returned in the fall carrying valuable

cargoes of furs. Later the keelboats were replaced by steamboats. The Nebraska Indian tribes were important in the fur trade, and as early as 1810 a fur trading post was built in the vicinity of Omaha. Later Bellevue became one of the most important trading posts in the West. Peter A. Sarpy, associated with the American Fur Company, lived there and records show that he was a leading citizen of the community in territorial days.

The first steamboat ascending the Missouri to a point five miles south of the Council Bluff was Major Stephen H. Long's "Western Engineer" in 1819. After the creation of Nebraska Territory in 1854, Missouri River steamboats brought hundreds of settlers to the new land. They also carried vast quantities of freight to the new Nebraska communities of Rulo, St. Stephens, Brownville, Nebraska City, Wyoming, Plattsmouth, Bellevue, Omaha, Ft. Calhoun, DeSoto, Decatur, and Dakota City. Later these same boats carried the products of Nebraska to markets downstream. Freighters transferred supplies to heavy-duty overland wagons and then continued their journey across the plains to settlements farther west. Many emigrants arrived in Nebraska via Missouri River steamboats, and crossed the plains by covered wagons.



THE PLATTE VALLEY AMERICA'S GREAT ROAD WEST

The Platte River, like the Missouri, was first used by fur traders. From 1804 until 1812, the only known route to the Pacific Northwest followed the Missouri River. In 1812, Robert Stuart headed east from Astoria, crossed the Rocky Mountains at South Pass, and followed the Platte

Valley to the Missouri. During the 1820's, William H. Ashley pioneered the use of the Platte River route to and from the rich trapping grounds in the Rocky Mountains. However, wagons and pack trains soon replaced the boats, for the Platte was not navigable. Even those who tried to float boats of the shallowest draft on its broad waters were unsuccessful. The Platte Valley provided one of the world's most magnificent natural highways, and on this road America literally moved west.

Occasionally during the 1830's, missionaries attached themselves to the fur caravans for protection on the long trek across the plains and mountains. These men included Jason Lee, Samuel Parker, and Dr. Marcus Whitman, who were the vanguard of settlement in Oregon. In 1842, Lt. John C. Fremont explored the Platte Valley-South Pass route west and wrote a report, widely circulated in the East, which praised the route's advantages as a way to Oregon. After Fremont's journey, the trail was no longer just the trappers' route but rapidly became the main highway for thousands of emigrants.

However, even before Fremont's trip, emigrants bound for the Pacific had ventured out over the plains. A small group of home seekers had gone overland to Oregon in 1841, followed by another small colony in 1842. In 1843, a thousand covered-wagon pioneers made their way to Oregon, and a two-decade massive migration west was begun. The pioneer band of Mormons, fleeing persecution in Illinois, were led by Brigham Young through the Platte Valley on their way to a new Zion in the valley of the Great Salt Lake in 1847. Like the earlier Oregon pioneers, they were followed by thousands in the years to come.

Two of the most numerous cross-country migrations occurred in 1849 and 1850, when gold was discovered in California, and later, in 1858, when it was announced that gold had been found in Colorado. Some of the earlier westward-bound pioneers had turned off the trail to go to California rather than Oregon, but it was not until the discovery of gold that men went there in great numbers. Estimates vary, but at least 25,000, and perhaps as many as 50,000, goldseekers trekked through the Platte Valley in 1849 and 1850, all bound for California. The number traveling the Platte route primarily to the Colorado gold fields in 1859-1860 is estimated to be 45,000.

The United States government established military posts along the trail during the 1840's to provide protection for the overland travelers. Fort Kearny was built in 1846 on the Missouri river, at the mouth of Table Creek (near present day Nebraska City). Soon the army discovered that this location was outside the main stream of overland travel, and in 1848 they moved Fort Kearny to a new location at the southernmost point of the big bend in the Platte. For more than two decades this fort provided assistance and protection to overland travelers, and was one of the most important centers along the trail. Part of the original military reservation is now Fort Kearny State Park. Farther west, the government purchased Fort Laramie from the American Fur Company in 1849, and turned it into a military establishment. An important stopping place for travelers, it was the army's principal field headquarters during the time of Indian troubles. It is now a National Historic Site.

The military posts in the West and the communities which developed in the Rocky Mountains required large quantities of goods from the East. Prior to the coming of the railroad, the only means of getting these supplies across the plains was by wagon. Subsequently, from the 1840's through the 1860's, large overland freighting companies were developed. Freight arrived via the Missouri River steamboats at Independence, Atchison, Leavenworth, St. Joseph, Nebraska City, and Omaha, and then was transferred to heavy-duty wagons which traveled across the Platte Valley to the mountains. The freight wagons, drawn by as many as twelve oxen,

carried loads varying from three to five tons at speeds of about two miles an hour--a far slower pace than our modern trucks which follow Interstate 80 today. Stage coaches filled the demand for "fast" service. The overland stage hauled passengers, express, and mail through the Platte Valley. The schedule, which at first took thirty-eight days from the Missouri River to California, later was shortened to nineteen days.

The Pony Express was the most dramatic of all the early attempts to improve communications between East and West. In operation for only a short time, from April 1860 through October 1861, its seemingly tireless young riders sped across the plains and mountains on a round-the-clock basis, in fair weather and foul, on a ten-day trip to the coast. The Express was a tremendously expensive venture, and it was impossible to carry enough mail in saddlebags to pay the vast outlay for horses, riders, and stations required to maintain the service. The operation almost brought financial ruin to the great freighting firm of Russell, Majors, and Waddell, who initiated the venture.

The transcontinental telegraph reached Omaha in 1860. In October, 1861, it was joined at Salt Lake City to a line being built from California. After the nation was spanned by telegraph, there was no longer a need for the Pony Express, and it was discontinued.

The final chapter in the great drama of overland migration through the Platte Valley was the construction of the transcontinental railroad. In 1865 the Union Pacific, which had been chartered by Congress in 1862, began building west from Omaha. By 1866 trains were running as far west as Kearney, and by the end of 1867 the rails had been laid to the Nebraska-Wyoming line. On May 10, 1869, at Promontory Point, Utah, the nation was united by rails when the Union Pacific rails joined those of the Central Pacific, a line built east from Sacramento. The Platte Valley continued to be the major route west because of the railroad, and it is still considered the main corridor of commerce between the East and the West.

THE PLATTE VALLEY TRAILS

OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAIL

This trail was the best-known route through the Platte Valley. Originating at Independence, Missouri, it crossed the northeastern corner of Kansas and entered Nebraska at the line between Gage and Jefferson Counties. Then it followed the Little Blue valley across Jefferson, Thayer, Nuckolls, Clay, and Adams Counties. At this point it continued west along the south side of the Platte River to a site in Keith County, where the trail crossed the South Platte River. Crossing the point of land between the forks of the river, it continued along the south side of the North Platte River into Wyoming.

There were many alternate routes determined by the conditions of the trail, such as caused by the seasons and by the availability of grass. The South Platte was forded at numerous points between the present day towns of North Platte and Julesburg, Colorado. An important variation, particularly for the overland freight wagons, which often used Nebraska City as an eastern terminal, was the so-called "Nebraska City-Fort Kearny Cut-Off." This road, laid out and improved during the 1860's, ran almost due west from Nebraska City to the Platte River in Hall County. Prior to the opening of this road, freighters from Nebraska City had to use the more round-about Ox-Bow Trail, which went northwest from Nebraska City, crossed Salt Creek at Ashland, and joined the Platte near the present town of Cedar Bluffs.

Early travelers eagerly watched for the famous landmarks along the trail. Many of these sites are still visible today, and most of them have been appropriately marked. The best-known sites in Nebraska were Rock Creek Crossing in Jefferson County; Thirty-two Miles Creek in Adams

County; Fort Kearny in Kearney County; Cottonwood Springs, Fort McPherson, Sioux Lookout, and O'Fallon's Bluff, all in Lincoln County; California Crossing in Keith County; Ash Hollow in Garden County; and Chimney Rock and Jail and Courthouse Rocks, all in Morrill County. In places along the trail, the old ruts are still visible, particularly at Scott's Bluff, Ash Hollow, Fort McPherson, and Rock Creek Station.

Today Fort Kearny is a state historical park; Fort McPherson, a national cemetery; Scott's Bluff, a national monument; and Chimney Rock, a national historic site, administered by the Nebraska State Historical Society. At Nebraska City you will find Arbor Lodge State Historical Park, and not far from the trail in Gage County is the Homestead National Monument of America, the site of the first homestead in the United States. Rock Creek Station is now a State Historical Park.

MORMON TRAIL

Brigham Young, in the spring of 1847, led a pioneer band of Mormons west from Winter Quarters, located just north of Omaha. They preferred to travel alone, so they avoided the widely used trails south of the Platte River, and followed the Platte along its northern bank across Nebraska. The most noted spot on this trail is the Mormon Cemetery. Located at Florence, now incorporated into Omaha, the cemetery contains graves of those who died of hunger and disease during their stay at Winter Quarters in 1846-1847.

OX-BOW TRAIL

Starting from Nebraska City, the Ox-Bow Trail, also called the Fort Kearny and Nebraska City Road, headed northwest and crossed Salt Creek near present-day Ashland, followed Wahoo Creek to a point near present-day Cedar Bluffs in Saunders County, and then continued westward on the south side of the Platte River. Eight miles east of Fort Kearny, the Ox-Bow Trail joined the old Oregon Trail from Independence, Missouri. It was 250 miles from Nebraska City to Fort Kearny by this "ox-bow" route.

Advantages of this route were the rock-bottom ford across Salt Creek at Ashland and the plentiful supply of water and wood. Also, those who followed the Platte felt more secure on a well-traveled route. However, the eastern Platte valley with its sand and its swampy areas was impassable when wet, and this, coupled with the longer round-about route, caused Alexander Majors of the Russell, Majors, and Waddell Freighting Company to have surveyed from Nebraska City to Fort Kearny, a more direct route, which became known as the Nebraska CityFort Kearny Cut-Off.

NEBRASKA CITY-FORT KEARNY CUT-OFF

The trail began at Nebraska City and crossed Otoe, Lancaster, Seward, York, Hamilton, Adams, and Hall Counties before joining the Ox-Bow Trail a few miles east of Fort Kearny, located on the Platte River in Kearney County.

Factors in locating this trail were both historical and geographical. Nebraska City was the location of Old Fort Kearny at Table Creek in present-day Otoe County. The freighting company of Russell, Majors, and Waddell had selected Nebraska City as their terminal, and had hauled freight over the Ox-Bow Trail, which crossed Salt Creek at present-day Ashland, and then followed the Platte River to Fort Kearny. As early as 1849, travelers' journals described several different routes from Nebraska City to Fort Kearny; however, all had one aim: to get their wagons into the broad Platte valley as soon as possible.

Hoping to find a shorter, easier route, Alexander Majors hired a surveyor in 1860. Geographically speaking, the exploring expedition found an ideal route. In addition to firm roadbeds and easy grades and stream crossings, there was a plentiful supply of wood and water. This more direct route, laid out in 1860 and 1861, became the main highway between Nebraska City and Fort Kearny, and cut the distance to Fort Kearny by 75 miles, as compared to the Ox-Bow Trail.

After 1860, most emigrants and freighters starting out from Nebraska City used the new cut-off. Later this trail became known as the "Steam Wagon Road," for it was from Nebraska City in 1862 that "General" Joseph R. Brown began his unsuccessful attempt to drive his steam wagon to Denver and the Colorado mines. A few miles west of Nebraska City the steam wagon broke down and Brown's plan eventually was abandoned.

Because the route was in nearly a straight line, the trail was often said to be an air-line route. Nebraska City newspapers, keeping the trail in the public eye through editorials and news articles, frequently called the cut-off the "Great Central Airline Route."

OTHER TRAILS

SIDNEY-BLACK HILLS TRAILS

The discovery of gold in the Black Hills (1874) precipitated a great rush to that region. Many goldseekers rode the Union Pacific westward to Sidney, and then struck off to the north through Cheyenne, Morrill, Box Butte, and Dawes Counties to establish what became known as the Sidney-Black Hills Trail. It became a great freighting road, as vast quantities of freight were hauled from the railroad at Sidney via heavy-duty wagons to the mining camps of the Black Hills. Stage coaches also operated here, and on their return trips south frequently carried valuable cargoes of gold. Business was so great that H.T. Clarke of Bellevue built a bridge across the North Platte near the present-day city of Bridgeport. A masterpiece of solid construction, the bridge was a sixty-one span truss, two-thousand feet long, built of sturdy timbers. For twenty-five years it withstood heavy loads, ice, and floods. An important stop on this trail was near Fort Robinson in Sioux County.

NIORARA TRAIL

This rather unknown trail, also called Sawyers Trail, was surveyed by James A. Sawyers and his party in 1865. Beginning at the mouth of the Niobrara River, the trail followed the river for about 300 miles, then headed northwest across the White River and into present-day Wyoming. Continuing northwest, it eventually joined the Bozeman Trail and terminated at Virginia City in present-day Montana, over 1,000 miles from the Niobrara.

This trail did not have extensive use because it was too far north of the main emigration route. It was situated in a more arid country than the Oregon Trail and the government did not fortify the route. However, the Niobrara Trail later became an alternate route to the Black Hills, and was joined from the south by a trail coming up the Elkhorn Valley.

TEXAS-OGALLALA TRAIL

Cattle herds, rather than people, made this trail famous in Nebraska history. From 1875 to 1884, Ogallala--Nebraska's Cowboy Capitol--was the terminal for cattle drives north from Texas. From June to August, the sleepy tank-town on the Union Pacific hummed with activity. Here the cattle herds were sold to Nebraska and Wyoming ranchers for winter pasturing. A year or two later these same herds were rounded up and shipped east for marketing. When the route

north became settled by homesteaders, trail drives were pushed further west and finally were discontinued. The trail entered Nebraska in Hitchcock County, crossed through the corners of Hayes and Chase Counties, divided Perkins County, and terminated at Ogallala in Keith County.

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NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAILS THROUGH NEBRASKA AND WYOMING



California National Historic Trail

<http://www.nps.gov/cali/historyculture/stories.htm>

"I think that I may without vanity affirm that I have seen the elephant."

- Louisa Clapp

The elephant that emigrants on the California Trail joked about was a common metaphor for the difficulty of their journey. If you had "*seen the elephant*", then you had hit some hard traveling.

And if you wanted to get to California in pre-railroad times, you were guaranteed an arduous trek. California emigrants faced the greatest challenges of all the pioneer emigrants of the mid-19th century. In addition to the Rockies, these emigrants faced the barren deserts of Nevada and the imposing Sierra Nevada Range.

With a variety of destinations in California, and jumping-off points in Missouri, the California Trail resembles not a single cord, but a rope frayed at both ends. Numerous cutoffs and alternate routes were tried to see which was the "best" in terms of terrain, length and sufficient water and grass for livestock.

The total California National Historic Trail system includes approximately 5,665 miles. Of this, approximately 1,100 miles of trail still exist on the ground as trail ruts, traces and other obvious remnants. About 2,171 miles of this system cross public lands, where most of the physical evidence that still exists today is located. An estimated 320 historic sites along the trail system will eventually be available for public use and interpretation.

Over 200,000 gold-seekers and farmers used the California Trail to reach the gold fields and rich farmlands of California during the 1840s and 1850s, the greatest mass migration in American history.



The Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail

<http://www.nps.gov/mopi>

Led by Brigham Young, roughly 70,000 Mormons traveled along the **Mormon Trail** from 1846 to 1869 in order to escape religious persecution. The Pioneer Company of 1846-1847 established a route from Nauvoo, Illinois, to Salt Lake City, Utah, covering about 1,300 miles that would include construction of new ferries and bridges, and the placement of markers for others to follow.

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History & Culture

<http://www.nps.gov/mopi/historyculture/index.htm>

The history of the Mormon Trail cannot be understood without an awareness of the Mormon religion itself. The great Mormon migration of 1846-1847 was but one step in the Mormons' quest for religious freedom and growth.

The Mormon religion, later known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, was founded by Joseph Smith on April 6, 1830 in Fayette, New York. Smith experienced visions as a teenager and would later be regarded as a prophet by the Mormons. In 1827, he claimed that an angel showed him buried gold plates which he then transcribed into The Book of Mormon.

All who subscribed to the beliefs of this text became known as Mormons. Membership grew rapidly, but not all were enthused about Smith's new religion. Persecution of the Mormons led to subsequent moves westward for the church, first to Ohio, then to Missouri and then to Nauvoo, Illinois. Smith envisioned a permanent settlement in Nauvoo. But both the Mormons' time in Nauvoo and Smith's life were to be short-lived.

From 1839 until 1846, the Mormon church was headquartered in Nauvoo where church members were able to prosper and practice their religion peacefully. But before long, tensions arose when many citizens began to view the Mormons with contempt.

Mormon practices such as polygamy, in combination with the quick growth of the church, contributed to a growing intolerance among some Illinois citizens. Hostilities broke out and on June 27, 1844, Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were killed by an angry mob while jailed in Carthage, Illinois.

Brigham Young stepped in as Smith's successor and immediately began furthering Smith's plans for a move to the Far West. By now, the Mormon population of Nauvoo neared 11,000, making it one of the largest cities in Illinois. Yet the persecution of Mormons continued. In one month alone in 1845, more than 200 Mormon homes and farm buildings were burned around Nauvoo in an attempt by foes to force out the Mormons.

Possible locations for a new home for the Mormons included Oregon, California and Texas. But with Smith's acquisition of John Fremont's map and report of the West in 1844, the Salt Lake region of Utah was chosen as the Mormons' destination. Young and his devotees made plans for an exodus to this new land. By 1846 the Mormon migration had begun.

The 1847 Trek

<http://www.nps.gov/mopi/historyculture/history2.htm>

This is the place, drive on."

--- Brigham Young, upon arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, 1847

By the time the spring of 1847 approached in Winter Quarters, nearly 400 Mormon lives had been lost to various causes. Yet there was a vital bit of good news during their stay.

The news came when the famous Jesuit, Father Pierre Jean de Smet, passed through Winter Quarters on his way east. The Jesuit was one of the few white men who had ever seen the Great Salt Lake. His information on routes and conditions was extended freely to the Mormons, who eagerly anticipated their next move west.

On April 5, 1847, Brigham Young led the first Mormon wagon train out of Winter Quarters bound for Utah. Conditions, timing, experience and organization were on the Mormons' side this time and the trip went much easier than the previous year's trial. 148 people, three of whom were women, 72 wagons, and a large collection of livestock made up this first group.

For this first leg of the journey, the Mormons generally followed the Oregon Trail, also known as the Great Platte River Road. The well-beaten route took them along the Platte River through Nebraska, then along the North Platte River to Fort Caspar, then across Wyoming to Fort Bridger.

At Fort Bridger on July 9, the Mormons left the Oregon Trail with 116 miles left to go. The previous year, the Reed-Donner party had blazed a route across Utah on their way to California. The Mormons took advantage of this route and followed it through the Wasatch Range and into the Great Salt Lake region. Yet this last 116 miles were the most difficult of the entire journey.

The people were filthy and weary and both wagons and livestock were weakened from the previous 1,000 miles of trail. The Wasatch Range proved to be a formidable barrier with its brush-choked canyons and steep passes.

Finally, on July 24, 1847, the first group of Mormons arrived at their new home in the Great Salt Lake Valley. Immediately, the Mormons began establishing the makings of a town and planted crops in preparation for the coming Mormon emigrants. From 1847 to 1869, until the completion of the transcontinental railroad, nearly 70,000 Mormons would make the journey along the Mormon Trail.



Oregon Trail National Historic Trail

<http://www.nps.gov/oreg/historyculture/index.htm>

*I should compare the (South) pass to the ascent of the capitol hill
from the avenue at Washington."*

*- John Fremont, 1843, describing the ease of using South Pass to cross
the Rocky Mountains.*

In 1800, America's western border reached only as far as the Mississippi River. Following the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 the country nearly doubled in size, pushing the nation's western edge past the Rocky Mountains.

Yet the wilderness known as Oregon Country (which included present-day Oregon, Washington and part of Idaho) still belonged to the British, a fact that made many Americans eager to settle the region and claim it for the United States.

American Indians had traversed this country for many years, but for whites it was unknown territory. Lewis and Clark's secretly funded expedition in 1803 was part of a U.S. Government plan to open Oregon Country to settlement. However, the hazardous route blazed by this party was not feasible for families traveling by wagon. An easier trail was needed.

Robert Stewart of the Astorians (a group of fur traders who established Fort Astoria in western Oregon's Columbia River) became the first white to use what later became known as the Oregon Trail. Stewart's 2,000-mile journey from Fort Astoria to St. Louis in 1810 took 10 months to complete; still, it was a much less rugged trail than Lewis and Clark's route.

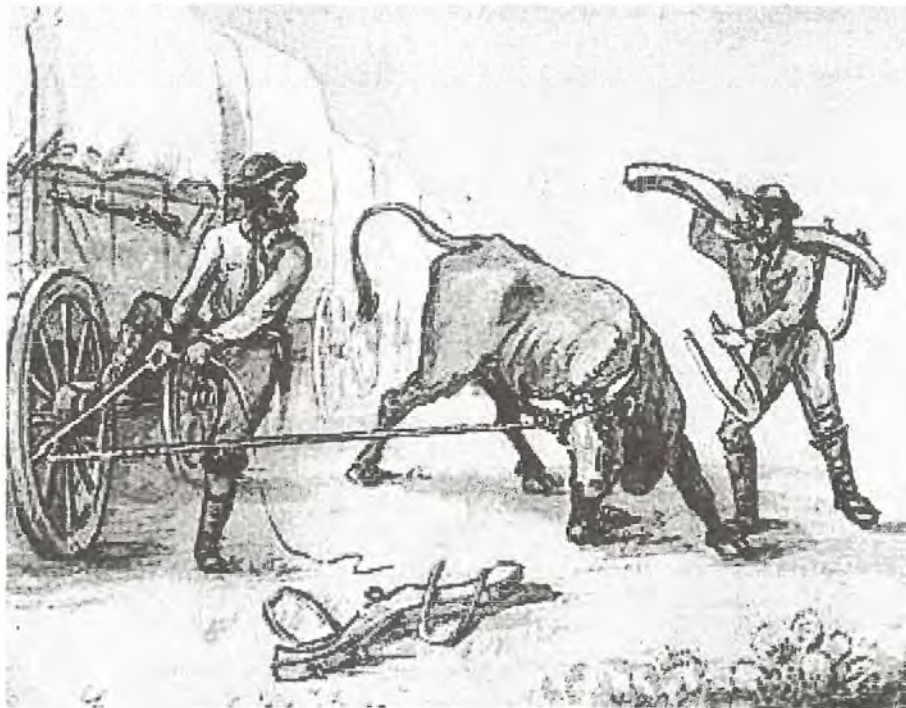
It wasn't until 1836 that the first wagons were used on the trek from Missouri to Oregon. A missionary party headed by Marcus Whitman and his wife Narcissa bravely set out to reach the Willamette Valley. Though the Whitmans were forced to abandon their wagons 200 miles short of Oregon, they proved that families could go west by wheeled travel.

In the spring of 1843, a wagon train of nearly 1,000 people organized at Independence, Missouri with plans to reach Oregon Country. Amidst an overwhelming chorus of naysayers who doubted their success, the so-called "Great Migration" made it safely to Oregon. Crucial to their success was the use of South Pass, a 12-mile wide valley that was virtually the sole place between the plains and Oregon where wagons could cross the formidable Rocky Mountains.

By 1846, thousands of emigrants who were drawn west by cheap land, patriotism or the promise of a better life found their way to Oregon Country. With so many Americans settling the region, it became obvious to the British that Oregon was no longer theirs. They ceded Oregon Country to the United States that year.

Making The Trek

<http://www.nps.gov/oreg/historyculture/history1.htm>



Yoking the Wild Bull by William Henry Jackson

NPS - Scotts Bluff NM

If Americans today were to undertake a four-month, 2,000-mile journey on foot without the aid of modern conveniences, many would be in for a harsh jolt. Despite the lingering romance with which many view the emigrant tide on the Oregon Trail, the journey was tough.

Emigrants traveled under the dual yoke of fear and withering physical requirements. Rumors of hostile Indians coupled with unforgiving country, disease and dangerous work made life difficult.

Yet thousands did make it to Oregon. What was their journey like on a day-to-day basis?

First of all, timing was important to the emigrants' success in reaching Oregon. The most favorable time to depart from Missouri was in April or May. This would put them on schedule to make the high mountain passes when winter snows would not be a threat.

Mistakes were often made before the journey even began. In preparing for the trip, many emigrants overloaded their wagons with supplies. As a result, not long after leaving Missouri,

dumping excess items was a common sight along the trail. Tools, guns and food were considered vital - heirlooms were not.

The relatively gentle first leg of the route along the Platte River was a time for the emigrants to settle into travel mode. This meant getting used to hitching and unhitching the oxen, cattle and mules whenever a stop was made - hard and dangerous work. It also meant constant wagon maintenance, foraging for firewood and clean water, cooking over open fires and learning how to break and set camp every day.

When emigrants reached Chimney Rock and Scotts Bluff, their journey was one-third over. But more challenging terrain lay ahead as water, firewood and supply depots became more scarce. Buffalo herds that initially were a dependable food source for the emigrants also thinned out due to excessive killing.

The challenge of crossing many rivers and the Continental Divide created other severe tests for the emigrants. Summer temperatures, miles of shadeless trail and choking dust compounded to make life decidedly unenjoyable. Though confrontations with Indians were rare, the fear of attack was a constant worry.

The last leg of the trail was the most difficult. But thoughts of approaching winter snows kept emigrants motivated to move as quickly as possible. The Blue Mountains in eastern Oregon and the Cascade range in the west presented barriers that slowed progress.

Upon reaching The Dalles, the emigrants were faced with either taking their chances on the dangerous Columbia River, or, starting in 1846, taking the safer but longer Barlow Road. Sam Barlow's toll road became the preferred route for the emigrants. Finally, if money, animals, wagons, supplies and morale held out, the emigrants reached the Willamette Valley.



Pony Express National Historic Trail

<http://www.nps.gov/poex/historyculture/index.htm>

“Men Wanted” The undersigned wishes to hire ten or a dozen men, familiar with the management of horses, as hostlers, or riders on the Overland Express Route via Salt Lake City. Wages \$50 per month and found.” - Ad in Sacramento Union, March 19, 1860.

More than 1,800 miles in 10 days! From St. Joseph, Missouri, to Sacramento, California the Pony Express could deliver a letter more quickly than ever before.

In operation for only 18 months between April 1860 and October 1861, the Pony Express nevertheless has become synonymous with the Old West. In the era before electronic communication, the Pony Express was the thread that tied East to West.

As a result of the 1849 Gold Rush, the 1847 Mormon exodus to Utah and the thousands who moved west on the Oregon Trail starting in the 1840s, the need for a fast mail service beyond the Rocky Mountains became obvious. This need was partially filled by outfits such as the Butterfield Overland Mail Service starting in 1857 and private carriers in following years.

But when postmaster general Joseph Holt scaled back overland mail service to California and the central region of the country in 1858, an even greater need for mail arose. The creation of the Leavenworth & Pike's Peak Express Company by William H. Russell, Alexander Majors and William B. Waddell became the answer. It was later known as the Pony Express.

On June 16, 1860, about ten weeks after the Pony Express began operations, Congress authorized the a bill instructing the Secretary of the Treasury to subsidize the building of a transcontinental telegraph line to connect the Missouri River and the Pacific Coast.

The passage of the bill resulted in the incorporation of the Overland Telegraph Company of California and the Pacific Telegraph Company of Nebraska. On July 4, 1861, Edward Creighton began building the Nebraska company's line westward from Julesburg, Colorado, toward Salt Lake City. Twelve hundred miles to the west on the same day at Fort Churchill in Nevada, James Gamble set the first pole in the Overland Telegraph Company's line.

While the lines were under construction the Pony Express operated as usual. Letters and newspapers were carried the entire length of the line from St. Joseph to Sacramento, but telegrams were carried only between the rapidly advancing wire ends.

On October 20, 1861, Creighton won the race to Salt Lake City. Four days later Gamble's crew arrived. On October 26 the wires were joined, and San Francisco was in direct contact with New York City. On that day the Pony Express was officially terminated, but it was not until November that the last letters completed their journey over the route.

Most of the original trail has been obliterated either by time or human activities. Along many segments, the trail's actual route and exact length are matters of conjecture. In the western states, the majority of the trail has been converted, over the years, to double track dirt roads. Short pristine segments, believed to be traces of the original trail, can be seen only in Utah and California. However, approximately 120 historic sites may eventually be available to the public, including 50 existing Pony Express stations or station ruins.

The First Ride

<http://www.nps.gov/poex/historyculture/history1.htm>

"...citizens paraded the streets with bands of music, fireworks were set off....the best feeling was manifested by everybody." - New York times, April 14, 1860 on the success of the first Pony Express delivery.

With only two months to make the Pony Express a reality, the team of William H. Russell, Alexander Majors and William B. Waddell had their hands full in January 1860. Over 100 stations, 400-500 horses and enough riders were needed - at an estimated cost of \$70,000.

But on April 3, 1860, the first official delivery began at the eastern terminus of the Pony Express in St. Joseph, Missouri. Amid great fanfare and with many dignitaries present, a mail pouch containing 49 letters, five telegrams and miscellaneous papers was handed to a rider. At 7:15 p.m., a cannon was fired and the rider bolted off to a waiting ferry boat.

The Pony Express was set up to provide a fresh horse every 10-15 miles and a fresh rider every 75-100 miles. 75 horses were needed total to make a one-way trip. Average speed was 10 miles per hour.

On April 9 at 6:45 p.m., the first rider from the east reached Salt Lake City, Utah. Then, on April 12, the mail pouch reached Carson City, Nevada at 2:30 p.m.

The riders raced over the Sierra Nevada Mountains, through Placerville, California and on to Sacramento. Around midnight on April 14, 1860, the first mail pouch was delivered via the Pony Express to San Francisco.

Despite the success and approval of the public, the Pony Express was by no means a trouble-free operation after the first delivery. Costs and difficulties of maintaining the extensive network of stations, people and horses were numerous. Yet the Pony Express, with the exception of delays caused by the Pyramid Lake War, stayed in operation until the telegraph's arrival in 1861.

TRANSPORTATION IN NEBRASKA

Situated in the center of the United States, Nebraska has long been important to transcontinental travel. Much has been discussed and written about the Mormon, Oregon, and California Trails as well as the Pony Express. Our role in the history of transportation does not end there. The transcontinental rail road may have doomed the overland wagon roads, but its history coursed across Nebraska, often along the same travel corridor as the old wagon roads and earlier Native American and Fur Trader trade routes. With the railroad, towns like North Platte, Ogallalla, and Sidney become important railroad freight depots, serving freight roads as far away as the Black Hills of South Dakota where The Sidney-Black Hills road served hungry (and thirsty) miners.

In the Twentieth Century, travelers with new-fangled automobiles found themselves crossing our state. There was a need for new and improved roads. Although these routes did not follow the North Platte River, the Lincoln Highway, US Highway 26 and Interstate 80 follow the old wagon roads, across most of the state. These routes continue the centuries-old practice of traveling across the wide open spaces and experiencing the beauty and hospitality of Nebraska.

The Road Ranch

Tourists whizzing down Interstate 80 in Nebraska are covering the same ground traveled by emigrants over a century ago. And just as modern-day visitors search for a spot to spend the night, so early travelers headed for the nearest road ranch. Spread twelve to fifteen miles apart--a good day's travel by ox team--the road ranches offered accommodation for both emigrants and their stock.

Road ranches usually consisted of a large stable, a ranch house of sorts where travelers could bed down, and possibly a blacksmith shop and saloon. Smaller ranches were simply private dwellings where travelers could squeeze in at the family supper table.

Some ranches were a cut above the usual grim way-station. The Boyd Ranch on the Oregon Trail in buffalo county was widely renowned for its brewery and ice house. Cheese Creek ranch on the old Nebraska City-Ft. Kearny trail was named for the cheese made and sold by the proprietors. A far cry from our modern Interstate rest areas, road ranches still provided valuable services to folks heading west.

Nebraska State Historical Society
HISTORY MINUTE 047

Overland Freight

Before completion of the railroad west, Nebraskans did a thriving and lucrative business hauling freight overland. Some of the hauling was done by large firms like Russell, Majors, and Waddell. But a lot of the freight work went to enterprising independents who scraped together animals and a vehicle and headed west.

A surprising amount of freighting went on in the wintertime. After gold was discovered in Colorado, there was good money to be made trucking foodstuffs to hungry miners. Wagon loads of eggs, packed in oats, could be sold off for a dollar an egg. Butter, hogs, sausage, and lard were easily preserved by nature's refrigerator. A wagon-load of apples sold for \$20 a bushel. And one pair of Germans, made their fortunes hauling oysters. The inventive duo filled their wagon bed

with fresh oysters, poured on water and let the whole mess freeze into a solid lump. They set up shop west of Julesburg, Colorado, and pocketed \$10 per gallon of oysters for their trouble.

Heading west by wagon in winter had its risk, but it also promised great rewards.

Nebraska State Historical Society
HISTORY MINUTE 127

TELEGRAPH

Before Nebraska was even a state, communication with both coasts was possible via the telegraph. In 1858 the Butterfield stage carried messages from the Missouri River to the West Coast in 25 days. In 1860, the Pony Express cut the time to nine days. But in October of 1861, completion of the Pacific Telegraph Line made communication almost instantaneous.

Edward Creighton, who had built the telegraph line from St. Louis to Omaha, headed west in 1860 to survey a route to the Pacific. Western Union, the California State Telegraph Company, and Brigham Young were all involved in the project. Construction went ahead rapidly. The line reached Ft. Kearny in time to carry news of Abraham Lincoln's presidential victory. During the spring of 1861 the line was as far west as Julesburg, and by October the crew met the line coming in from the west as Salt Lake City.

The talking wires were not trouble-free. Poles were cut down, sections of wire were cut away, and telegraph stations were attacked by still-hostile Indians. Keeping the lines open became a perpetual battle, but in theory Nebraska was only moments away from the coasts.

PROGRESS OF THE UNION PACIFIC

The Union Pacific followed the old Oregon Trail up Nebraska's Platte Valley. It did not, however, cross the Continental Divide at famous South Pass. In 1865, still in uniform and campaigning against hostile Indians, General Dodge had accidentally discovered what he thought might be a practicable pass across the Wyoming Black Hills. Examination of this pass by U.P. surveyors confirmed Dodge's suspicions. Through Wyoming, therefore, the Union Pacific kept south of the Platte and the Sweetwater, thus considerably shortening the route.

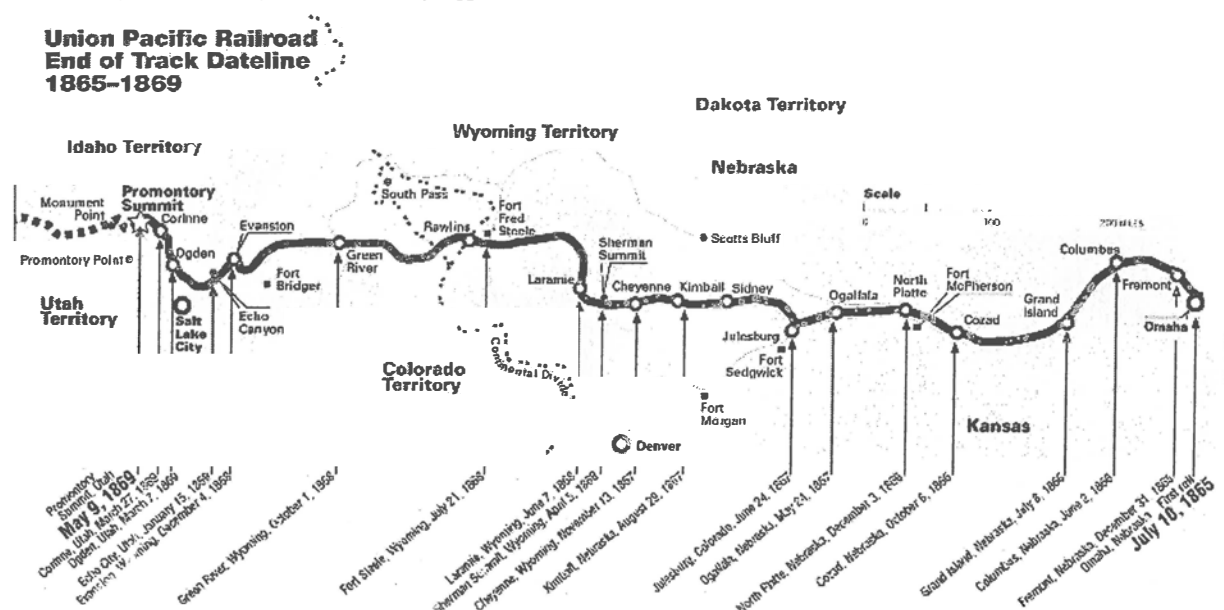
But the Union Pacific faced an obstacle that never troubled the Central Pacific, and in Nebraska it appeared in its ugliest form. The Sioux and Cheyenne Indians possessed a strength and a will to resist that the Paiutes of Nevada had long since lost. As the U.P. invaded their country, the dullest native soon understood what the rails meant to the Indian way of life. War parties swept down on surveyors, graders, and track-layers, then vanished before pursuit could be organized. Appreciating the importance of the railroad to their own task of destroying the Indian barrier, Generals Grant and Sherman stripped the frontier of troops to place large forces on the line of the Union Pacific. Forts sprang up along the right-of-way—McPherson, Sedgewick, Morgan, D. A. Russell, and Sanders. Soldiers guarded the construction workers and rode with the surveyors.

In the Wyoming Basin, where the road penetrated Sioux country, the surveying parties, with their small cavalry escorts, bore the brunt of Indian hostility. One tragedy occurred in June 1867, when Sioux warriors attacked Assistant Engineer Percy T. Browne and eight cavalymen. Forting up on a knoll, Browne and his men held the Indians at bay until dusk, when Browne caught a bullet in the stomach. The warriors withdrew during the night, and the soldiers carried

Browne on a blanket litter 15 miles to LaClede Station of the Overland Stage Company. There he died.

On August 6, 1867, with railhead far out in Wyoming, Indians struck near Plum Creek, Nebr. (present-day Lexington). Chief Turkey Leg's Cheyennes descended on the railroad and, as one of the Indians later recalled, "we got a big stick, and just before sundown one day tied it to the rails and sat down to watch and see what would happen." First came a handcar, which struck the "big stick" and sent its passengers flying. The Indians killed them, except for a man named Thompson, who was scalped but did not die. (A warrior dropped the scalp and Thompson retrieved it. Later, recovering from his wounds, he tried unsuccessfully to grow it back in place. For years it was on display in a jar of alcohol at the Council Bluffs Public Library.) Delighted with their first success, the Cheyennes next pried up some rails. A freight train came along, ran off the track, and piled up, a mass of flames, in a ravine next to the roadbed. Another train, following the first, quickly reversed itself and backed out of the danger area. The Indians broke into the freight cars and had a grand party with the contents—barrels of whiskey, bolts of calico, ribbons, bonnets, boots, and hats. All the following day they indulged in an orgy of fun-making, like children set free in a toy store. Finally, just as the raiders were leaving, a train loaded with Maj. Frank North's battalion of Pawnee Indian scouts steamed up to the wreck and hastened the departure.

The Union Pacific kept its stride. In 1865 it graded and bridged 100 miles and laid 40 miles of track. In 1866 it completed 265 miles of road: in 1867, 245 miles; and in 1868, 350 miles. In the winter of 1868-69 the rails moved into the rugged Wasatch Mountains where, on the summit and in Weber and Echo Canyons, the U.P. experienced on a lesser scale something of the ordeal that the C.P. had endured in the Sierra.



<http://www.uprr.com/aboutup/maps/index.shtml#historical>

Surveying parties of both railroads pushed into the Great Salt Lake Basin. Brigham Young, powerful president of the Mormon Church, expected the rails to come through Salt Lake City. But a route around the north end of Great Salt Lake possessed decided advantages, besides avoiding the treacherous salt flats west of the city. The Union Pacific chose to turn north at Ogden and follow the north shore of the lake, bypassing the Utah capital. Young was furious, and he threatened to withhold the Mormon aid on which the U.P. had counted. However, when

he discovered that the C.P. had also settled upon the northern route, he accepted the decision and threw the support of the church to both the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific, meanwhile organizing his own Utah Central Railroad to connect Salt Lake City with Ogden.

GOLDEN SPIKE National Historic Site

Historical Handbook Series No. 40

By Robert M. Utley

http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/hh/40/hh401.htm

SIDNEY-BLACK HILLS TRAIL

Gold was discovered in the Black Hills in August, 1874. By the spring of 1876, the Army had stopped enforcing a treaty which reserved the hills for the Sioux Indians. Miners soon began to pour into the gold regions.

From 1875 to 1881, the 267-mile trail north from Sidney carried the bulk of the traffic to the mining towns of Deadwood and Custer. The Union Pacific Railroad brought men and supplies into Sidney. North from Sidney moved stage coaches, freight wagons drawn by oxen or mules, herds of cattle, and riders on horseback. During 1878-1879 alone, over 22 million pounds of freight moved over the Sidney-Black Hills Trail. Gold shipments, worth up to \$200,000 each, moved south from the Black Hills to Sidney and the railroad.

The trail's only major obstacle was the North Platte River. In the spring of 1876, a 2000-foot wooden toll-bridge, known as Clarke's Bridge, was constructed near the present town of Bridgeport.

In October, 1880, the railroad reached Pierre, Dakota Territory, and most of the traffic to the Black Hills was diverted away from Sidney.

Sidney Chamber of Commerce

Historical Land Mark Council

US 30, west of Sidney

Cheyenne County

Marker 77

THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL HIGHWAY



The Lincoln Highway Association, formed in 1913 to build a New York-to-San Francisco highway, sold "highway memberships" to raise funds for the project. In Nebraska the road, which traversed twelve states, extended westward from Iowa along the Platte Valley route earlier used by emigrants, and followed the mainline Union Pacific Railroad into Wyoming.

The section of highway east of Grand Island was started in December, 1914, and an experimental paved mile was completed in 1915. Here, near the center of the transcontinental route, work began quickly because of strong public sponsorship. As the road was built, it was marked by red, white, and blue banded utility posts, three to a mile. In 1928 three thousand concrete markers were erected, each bearing a bronze medallion of the head of Abraham Lincoln.

Completed in 1927, the Lincoln Highway, the prototype transcontinental route designed for automobile traffic, stimulated highway improvement. It later became federally marked U.S. Highway 30. In the 1950-1960s Interstate 80 was built to carry east-west traffic through Nebraska. Though I-80 parallels the Lincoln Highway route in many counties, the older route continues as a part of the federal highway network.

Hall County Historical Society



<http://www.nebraskatransportation.org/history/photos/linchwy/stuck-2hrs.jpg>



<http://www.lincoln-highway-museum.org/Light/History-Index.html>

U.S. HIGHWAY 26

United States Highway 26 is an east-west United States highway. It started in Ogallala, Nebraska, and gradually grew to reach the West Coast in Oregon. When the U.S. highway system was first defined, it was limited to Nebraska and Wyoming; by the 1950s, it continued into Idaho and Oregon.

Much of the highway follows the path of the historic Oregon Trail. At its peak, immediately before the establishment of the interstate highway system, US 26 was 1,557 miles (2506 km) in length, and terminated in Astoria, Oregon.

Termini

As of 2004, the highway's eastern terminus is in Ogallala, Nebraska at an intersection with Interstate 80. Its western terminus is south of Seaside, Oregon at an intersection with U.S. Highway 101. Prior to 2004, the route's last 20 miles (32 km) were co-signed with U.S. Highway 101 from the highways' junction south of Seaside north to Astoria where its intersection with U.S. Highway 30 was also U.S. 30's western terminus.

States Traversed

Nebraska

The eastern terminus of US 26 is in Ogallala, Nebraska at Interstate 80. From there, it runs northwestward parallel to the North Platte River and intersects with U.S. Highway 385 in

Bridgeport, Nebraska. The largest city US 26 runs through in Nebraska is Scottsbluff, which is just 22 miles (35 km) from the Wyoming border. All told, there are 145 miles (233 km) of US 26 in the state of Nebraska.

Wyoming

Heading westward, the first city in Wyoming US 26 runs through is Torrington. About 50 miles (80 km) further west, US 26 joins Interstate 25 and remains co-signed with it until reaching Casper, Wyoming. From Casper to Shoshoni US 26 is co-signed with U.S. Highway 20. After that, US 26 comes close to Yellowstone National Park before curving southwestward and eventually entering Idaho.

Idaho

From Alpine, Wyoming, the road proceeds to Idaho Falls and joins Interstate 15. It departs at Blackfoot for the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory, then skirts the north edge of Craters of the Moon National Monument before joining Interstate 84 in Bliss. It joins further with U.S. Highway 20 at Mountain Home and remains with Highway 20 into Oregon.

Oregon

The segment, starting at its intersection with U.S. Highway 35 near Government Camp, Oregon and continuing westward to Sandy, Oregon, which closely follows the route of the Barlow Road, has served to define what is sometimes called the Mt. Hood Corridor.

Its westernmost segment, in Oregon between Portland and the coast, is known as the Sunset Highway. While many people may think it received its name because it stretches towards the sunset from Portland, it was officially named January 17, 1946 for the US 41st Infantry Division of the United States Army, also known as the "Sunset Division." Some local historians think that it was more than a coincidence that a logging complex in western Washington County, near the path of US 26, was called Sunset Camp many years before the highway was built.

http://www.historymania.com/american_history/U.S._Highway_26

INTERSTATE 80

Official work on the Nebraska portion of I-80 began in 1957, south of Gretna, NE. The dedication of Nebraska I-80 on October 19, 1974, marked Nebraska as the first state in the nation to complete its mainline interstate system.

As completed, I-80 stretches from New Jersey to San Francisco—over 2,900 miles of safe, uninterrupted roadway. The total length of the Nebraska section is 455.27 miles.

The estimated total cost of I-80 in Nebraska was \$435 million, or an average per mile cost of about \$950,000.

I-80 Quick Facts

Interstate 80 is one of the two most heavily traveled transcontinental highways in the United States. The Interstate is linked to about three-quarters of the estimated \$2.8 billion that travelers spent last year in Nebraska.

On an average non-summer day, more than 15,000 vehicles pass by Overton, about midway across the state. In the summer, the daily average surges to more than 20,000.

Of the main east-west routes, only I-40 carries as much traffic. Interstate 70 sees about 12,600 a day on average during the summer in western Kansas, while Interstate 90 logs about 7,500 across western South Dakota.

80 interchanges are along I-80 in Nebraska.

442 bridges are on or over I-80 in Nebraska.

25 rest areas and one scenic overlook (near Chappell) are on the Interstate in Nebraska. These rest areas are spaced 35-50 miles apart for convenience.

28 types of grasses and forbs (herbs other than grasses), 31 types of shrubs are found on Nebraska's I-80.

12 varieties of coniferous trees, and 39 types of deciduous trees are planted on the rights-of-way of I-80 in Nebraska.

570 informational and directional signs are located on Nebraska's I-80.

Nebraska Department of Roads
<http://www.nebraskatransportation.org>

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SITES

California Hill/Upper Crossing of the South Platte River - Brule, Nebraska

Near North Platte Nebraska, the Platte River splits into two major forks, with the South Platte running generally southwest towards Denver and the North Platte heading northwest towards Fort Laramie. Sooner or later, the emigrants were forced to cross the South Platte in order to reach and follow the North Platte towards South Pass.

Several crossing sites were used, but the Upper Crossing was the most important because it led directly to Ash Hollow, the best approach to the North Platte River. California Hill, encountered immediately after crossing the South Platte, was the first major grade faced by the emigrants. This necessitated a climb of 240 feet in just over 1½ miles in order to reach the plateau between the North and South Platte Rivers. Imposing trail ruts are still plainly visible most of the way up the hill.

The Nebraska State Historical Society, who owns the resource, invites you to get out of your car and walk in the footsteps of the pioneers. The panoramic views back toward California Crossing are spectacular.

<http://www.nps.gov/oreg/planyourvisit/site5.htm>

CALIFORNIA HILL

This hill, which became known as "California Hill," was climbed by thousands of emigrants heading west during the covered wagon migration, 1841-60. Many were bound for Oregon. California became the destination of a majority of overland travelers after gold was discovered there in 1848.

The most important crossing of the South Platte River during this period was south and a little east of here. After fording the river and ascending California Hill, the emigrants traveled northwesterly to reach the North Platte River by way of Ash Hollow. The terrain restricted the route wagons could take up the hill, causing deep ruts that are still clearly visible.

This site and marker were gifts to the Oregon California Trails Association by Malcolm E. Smith, Jr., in memory of Irene D. Paden, who dedicated much of her life to retracing and writing about the Oregon and California Trails. Assistance in acquiring the site was provided through the generous cooperation of Ivor D. and Carol A. Dilky, the Farmers Home Administration, and the Adams Bank and Trust.

*Oregon California Trails Association
Nebraska State Historical Society
U.S. 30, 5 miles west of Brule
Keith County Marker 313*

FORT SEDGWICK AND JULESBURG

Location: Sedgwick County. The site of Fort Sedgwick is just off an unimproved road slightly north of I-80 and south of U.S. 138, about 1-1/2 miles southeast of Ovid. The site of the original Julesburg is about 1 mile to the east of the fort site.

Early in 1865 this fort (1864-71) and town on the south bank of the South Platte felt the wrath generated among the southern Plains Indians by the Sand Creek Massacre (November 1864). The fort had been founded during the Indian uprisings in Colorado that peaked in the summer of 1864 and was responsible for protecting settlers, emigrants, and the overland route to

Denver. The town of Julesburg, just to the east, was a stage and freight station. On January 7, 1865, a thousand Cheyennes, Arapahos, and Sioux attacked the weakly garrisoned post, but failed to take it and sacked the town. A few weeks later, on February 18, they again pillaged the town, this time burning it to the ground. Thereafter the focus of hostilities shifted north of the Platte. No attempt was made to rebuild Julesburg, and it subsequently occupied three different sites nearby, including that of the present town.

The privately owned sites of the adobe fort and the first Julesburg are located in plowed fields. No remains of either are extant. A stone monument marks the original Julesburg site. The modern town contains the Julesburg Historical Museum, operated by the Fort Sedgwick Historical Society. It interprets the history of the fort and the towns.

http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/soldier/sitec3.htm#26

ASH HOLLOW STATE HISTORIC PARK

NEBRASKA GAME AND PARKS COMMISSION

Located ½ mile east and 3 miles south of Lewellen on U.S. 26, Ash Hollow State Historical Park is one of Nebraska's most intriguing and unusual park areas. Relics of bygone ages mingle with more recent yesterdays to present a kaleidoscope of time found in few places in the High Plains. Here have been found the bones of prehistoric rhinoceros, mammoths, and mastodons, all ancient mammals that once roamed the Great Plains.

Archaeological excavations in Ash Hollow indicate that early man used the area as much as 6,000 years ago-A small rock shelter in the side of the bluff near the park visitor center was used as a campsite by later Plains Indians for about 3,000 years. Its layered deposits of pre-history helped scientists to establish the time sequence for the occupation of the High Plains.

The same things that drew pre-historic man to the area also made it attractive to the Plains Indians and later to the westward-bound pioneers. This picturesque area provided the nomadic wanderers with the basic necessities of life - shelter, good water, wood, fruits, and berries.

The unusual geological strata known as the Ash Hollow Formation is a prime example of the Pliocene history of the central Great Plains just prior to the Ice Age. All of which means visitors can glimpse a bit of geology, paleontology, history of early man, and the story of the great pioneer trek west at this one significant area.

Ash Hollow Creek still bisects this canyon area, although the channel was changed with the construction of U.S. 26. Nonetheless, visitors can still see the original course of the creek and visualize the vast encampments of white-masted prairie schooners that crowded this "oasis" during the height of the westward migration Along the Oregon Trail.

For several thousand years, early peoples camped near Ash Hollow Cave. One of the latest groups identified was the Dismal River People, ancestors to the Plains Apache. Less than 100 years after the Dismal River People left the area, the White Man was exploring the Plains.

In 1811, John Jacob Astor founded a fur trade post, Fort Astoria, at the mouth of the Columbia River. He sent a ship around Cape Horn and another party overland to meet there. The overland party crossed the mountains between the Lewis and Clerk route and the later Oregon Trail. Both expeditions met with much misfortune, and in 1812 Robert Stuart took some men overland to report to Astor on their troubles.

Stuart and his six companions were the first white men to travel what was to become the Oregon Trail. They discovered the famed South Pass, which allowed crossing the Continental

Divide without going through rough mountains. Stuart saw Ash Hollow on March 26, 1813, and named it "Cedar Creek" since many cedars grew on its banks. The name didn't last, though.

Stuart mentioned that the canyon was heavily wooded a short distance from the mouth, but he couldn't tell what kind of trees they were, since he didn't enter the hollow. Later travelers found they were ash and the only such groves in the area. It was only natural to call the canyon "Ash Hollow".

With the Indian unrest along the Missouri River in the early 1820's, the fur companies explored the Platte river as an alternate route to the mountains. In 1824 and 1826, William Ashley used the North Platte Valley to transport supplies to the Rockies. In 1826, he sold his interest in his fur company to Jedediah Smith, David Jackson, and William Sublette. Ashley continued to supply the new firm and market their furs. In 1827 Ashley's men took a small cannon from St. Louis to the fur rendezvous at the Great Salt Lake. These were probably the first wheels to roll through Ash Hollow and over the South Pass.

In 1830 Smith, Jackson, and Sublette took a caravan Of 10 mule-drawn wagons, 81 men mounted on mules, and two Dearborns drawn by one mule each to the Wind River Mountains and returned in the fall loaded with furs. They reported to the government the feasibility of taking wagons over this road. They had opened the West for the great flood of people who would follow the trails they blazed.

Two years later Captain Bonneville and his trading expedition passed through Ash Hollow with the first wagons to go over the Continental Divide. The first white women to enter Ash Hollow were two missionary wives, Myra Eells and Mary Walker, who traveled West in 1838. The first emigrant train to travel the valley was the Bidwell-Bartleson Party which passed through Ash Hollow on June 13, 1841. They entered from the east, about 1½ miles south of the river ... just south of where the rock school stands today. They had followed the south side of the North Platte River, but there was a swamp at the foot of a bluff just east of Ash Hollow, so they detoured over the hills until they found a road into the hollow.

Early pioneers who followed the South Platte River usually crossed near O'Fallons Bluff, but the crossing was said to be very bad. Trains found a better place to cross farther upriver, just west of what is now Brule, NE. This became known as the Lower California Crossing, and these trains entered Ash Hollow from the south, down Windlass Hill.

The descent of Windlass Hill was accomplished in several ways ... some tied ropes to the back of their wagons and used "people-power" to slow them, others used their oxen, and still others locked the wheels to make them slide. Freighters took loaded wagons down without serious problems. Although many emigrants commented on the steepness of the grade, there were few accidents there.

The road from the hill to the main campground was quite sandy and could be heavy pulling, but people were rewarded with a pleasant place to camp and fresh spring water to drink. Road-weary pioneers rested amid this idyllic setting and repaired wagons and harness while their mules and oxen grazed the lush grasses. Today, you can still see the ruts etched by the heavily-laden wagons as they slid down Windlass Hill. Emigrant guidebooks of the period indicated that Ash Hollow Springs provided the best water of any stop along the Overland Trail.

An abandoned trapper's cabin became a sort of unofficial post office, as pioneers left letters for relatives and friends "back east" hoping an east-bound traveler would assist them on their way.

There were as many as four trading posts in the canyon at different times during the 1840's and 1850's. Archaeological research has located the site of one of these posts along the trail.

Here, emigrants could trade for supplies for the remainder of their trip, and Indians could barter skins for beads, ornaments, steel arrowheads, and other supplies. This may have been the trading post and U.S. Mail station that was burned by the Sioux in April of 1855. Nearby is the restored schoolhouse built in 1903 of native stone.



In 1962, The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission began acquisition of the 1,000-plus acres that now comprise the park. An interpretive center was built over the entrance of Ash Hollow Cave to protect its unique features. In 1978, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission opened the visitor center on the bluff overlooking the mouth of the canyon. A hiking trail from the visitor center provides access to the spring in the bottom of the canyon.

Also a part of the park, Windlass Hill is located on a separate tract 2¼ miles south on U.S. 26. Development there includes an interpretative shelter and informal signs. A walkway provides access to the crest of the hill to view the deep ruts carved by those thousands upon thousands of wagons that traveled the trail those many decades ago.

Ash Hollow State Historic Park
PO Box A
Lewellen, NE 69147
Phone: 308-778-5651

ASH HOLLOW HISTORIC MARKERS

ASH HOLLOW

Ash Hollow was famous on the Oregon Trail. A branch of the trail ran northwestward from the Lower California Crossing of the South Platte River a few miles west of Brule, and descended here into the North Platte Valley. The hollow, named for a growth of ash trees, was entered by Windlass Hill to the south. Wagons had to be eased down its steep slope by ropes.

Ash Hollow with its water, wood and grass was a welcome relief after the arduous trip from the South Platte and the travelers usually stopped for a period of rest and refitting. An abandoned trappers cabin served as an unofficial postoffice where letters were deposited to be carried to the "States" by Eastbound travelers. The graves of Rachel Pattison and other emigrants are in the nearby cemetery.

In 1855 a significant fight, commonly called the Battle of Ash Hollow, occurred at Blue Water Creek northwest of here. General Harney's forces sent out to chastise the Indians after the Grattan Massacre of 1854 here attacked Little Thunder's band of Brule Sioux while the Indians were attempting to parley, killed a large number and captured the rest of the band.

*Lewellen Lions Club
Historical Land Mark Council
US 26, east of Lewellen
Garden County Marker 15*

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*Historical Land Mark Council
U.S. I-80 Westbound rest area, east of Ogallala
Keith County Marker 98*

ASH HOLLOW GEOLOGY

Ash Hollow is a focal point for understanding the geologic history of the Central Great Plains prior to the onset of the Great Ice Age. It is the type locality of the Ash Hollow Formation, named by Henry Engelmann after a visit in 1858-59. These sediments were deposited in ancient valley systems that drained east from the Rocky Mountains.

Much of the ancient valley-fill is exposed in cross section in the cliff faces along Ash Hollow. The basal pebble-gravel forms the roof of Ash Hollow Cave in the exhibit area. Some of the overlying hard ledges or mortar-beds probably represent hard-pan or caliche soils, and others contain fossil grass seeds and root-casts of yucca, all indicative of a semi-arid climate and plants somewhat like today. But the animals found in these rocks were very different, including camels, rhinoceroses, and long-jawed mastodons, most of which became extinct before the Ice Age. The Ice Age animals were likewise mostly distinct from those now living here.

The earliest collections of fossils were made for E. D. Cope near here in 1879. Explorers who made geological contributions include John C. Fremont in 1843 and G. K. Warren in 1855.

*Nebraska Geological Society
Nebraska State Historical Society
Ash Hollow State Park, Hwy. 26 S.E. of Lewellen
Garden County Marker 160*

WINDLASS HILL PIONEER HOMESTEAD

The stones surrounding this marker are the remains of the homestead dwelling of Reverend Dennis B. Clary, a pioneer Methodist Minister, who received final patent for his homestead May

22, 1899. Mr. Clary was born September 1, 1822, in Maryland and immigrated to Nebraska in 1885. Using a horse-drawn cart fashioned from available materials, he hauled stone to this site for a two-room house. For years this was a land mark in Ash Hollow and marked the location of Windlass Hill. It was a popular stopping place for settlers traveling from the North Platte Valley area to the railroad at Big Springs, some twenty miles to the south.

The wagon road used at that time is still visible nearby. The Oregon Trail passed here, and the area surrounding the house was used by early travelers to repair damages caused by the hazardous trip down Windlass Hill.

This site was used July 29 - 30, 1967, as the stage setting for the "Ash Hollow Centennial Pageant" when a nearby sod house was reconstructed. Funds from this successful historical event provided this marker.

*Ash Hollow Centennial Association
Nebraska State Historical Society
US 26, 5 1/2 miles east of Lewellen
Garden County Marker 130*

BLUE WATER (Ash Hollow) BATTLEFIELD

Location: Garden County. The battlefield extends about 8 miles north up Blue Water Creek Valley from the U.S. 26 bridge across Blue Water Creek, about 2 miles northwest of Lewellen.

The Battle of Blue Water was the first major clash between U.S. soldiers and the Sioux Indians. In 1855, to punish the Sioux for their depredations following the Grattan Fight near Fort Laramie, Wyo., the previous year, the Army sent out Col. William S. Harney and an expedition of 600 men from Fort Leavenworth, Kans. Harney discovered the Brule Sioux village of Little Thunder in Blue Water Creek Valley, just above the creek's junction with the North Platte. By a circuitous route dragoons entered the valley and advanced downstream, while Harney and a force of infantrymen marched up the valley from the Platte. Attacked from two directions on September 3, the Indians scattered, but not before the troops killed 80 warriors, wounded five, and captured 70 women and children. Four soldiers met death and seven suffered wounds. The rest of the Sioux and Northern Cheyennes in the vicinity managed to avoid the troops. The latter moved northwestward to Fort Laramie and marched over the Fort Laramie-Fort Pierre Road through the heart of Sioux country to Fort Pierre, on the Missouri River. There they joined part of the expedition that had come up the Missouri and spent the winter of 1855-56. For almost a decade most of the Sioux gave no further serious trouble.

Except for patches of cultivation along Blue Water Creek, most of the valley is stock range and essentially resembles its historical appearance. The terrain near the mouth of the creek is rugged, but the site of the Indian village farther upstream is more level. Broken hills are on each side, where the Indians took refuge from Harney's troops. The site is in private ownership, but a 40-acre State historical park overlooks the battlefield.

http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/soldier/sitec9.htm#59

THE BATTLE OF BLUE WATER

On September 3, 1855, the U.S. Army's 600-man Sioux Expedition, commanded by Col. William S. Harney, attacked and destroyed a Lakota village located three miles north on Blue Creek. The fight became known as the Battle of Blue Water, sometimes the Battle of Ash Hollow after the nearby landmark, or the Harney Massacre.

The army's attack avenged the Indian annihilation of Lt. John Grattan's command near Fort Laramie in 1854. Harney concluded the more than 250 Brules and Oglalas camped on Blue Creek were the guilty parties. He divided his force and led his infantry towards the village. While Harney engaged in a delaying parley with Chief Little Thunder, the mounted troops had circled undetected to the north.

The infantry opened fire with its new, long-range rifles and forced the Indians to flee toward the mounted soldiers, who inflicted terrible casualties. Eighty-six Indians were killed, seventy women and children were captured, and their tipis were looted and burned. This first, yet often overlooked, military campaign against the Lakota kept the Overland Trail open, but only postponed until 1863-64 a war between the two nations.

*Erected in memory of Dennis Shimmin
Ash Hollow State Historical Park Sup.t., 1968-1998.
Nebraska State Historical Society
U.S. 26, 1 ½ miles west of Lewellen
Garden County Marker 403*



JOHN HOLLMAN GRAVE

It has been estimated that at least 20,000 persons died on the overland trail, between 1842 and 1859. This averages ten graves per mile over the 2,000 mile trail. Of the hundreds who died while crossing Nebraska, only seven identifiable graves remain.

Most trail graves had crude wooden or animal-bone markers. A very few had formal stones or iron wagon wheel rims. The nearby grave of John Hollman, like others in Western Nebraska,

was marked by a roughly fashioned local rock. Though most of the others have disappeared, Hollman's still stands, its crude lettering giving his name and that he died in June 1852.

Many overland travelers died from accidents, while a few were killed by Indians. The great majority died from disease. Asiatic cholera was the main killer, coming up the Mississippi from New Orleans. Parties crossing Missouri spread it across the Plains. It is not known how John Hollman died, but 1852 was a very bad cholera year and numerous deaths were recorded in this vicinity. Wagon ruts are still visible in parts of Garden County. Local rock formations were commented upon by many diarists. These remain today as a part of our historical heritage. The adjacent directional stone marker has been moved from its original site.

*Historical Society of Garden County
Nebraska State Historical Society
Nebraska 27, 2 miles south of Oshkosh
Garden County Marker 246*

ANCIENT BLUFF RUINS

This frequently mentioned landmark is the most dramatic and extensive bluff formation along the north side of the North Platte River. These three erosional remnant buttes were named by English Mormon converts who thought they resembled ancient towers, castles and ruins seen in their homeland.

On Sunday, May 23, 1847, Mormon leaders climbed the highest bluff, wrote their names on a buffalo skull, and placed it at the southwest corner. Thomas Bullock, "found that all of the Twelve had started on an exploring excursion to the mountains. At 9:24 they visited several of the Bluffs. . . . Professor Pratt took an observation by which he found it was 235 Feet higher than the River. . . . [They] rolled down some large stones from the top, and returned to Camp at 11:05."

<http://www.nps.gov/mopi/planyourvisit/site8.htm>

NARCISSA WHITMAN

Narcissa Whitman, trail-blazer and martyred missionary, is one of the great heroines of the frontier West. In 1836 she and Eliza Spalding, following the north side of the Platte on horseback, became the first white women to cross the American continent.

The Protestant "Oregon Mission" was composed of Dr. Marcus Whitman, Rev. Henry Spalding, their new brides, and William Gray. They traveled from New York to Otoe Indian Agency (Bellevue, Nebraska), then joined an American Fur Company caravan led by Thomas Fitzpatrick. From the Green River rendezvous they journeyed westward with traders of the Hudson's Bay Company. In November 1847, Narcissa, her husband, and eleven others, were massacred by Cayuse Indians at their Walla Walla mission, now a National Historic Site.

The missionaries passed this point in June 1836. In May 1847 the Mormon Pioneers passed here en route from Winter Quarters (present North Omaha) to Salt Lake Valley, calling these formations "Ancient Bluff Ruins." Beginning with the California Gold Rush in 1849 this "Mormon Pioneer Trail" became "the Council Bluffs Road" to emigrants bound for the West Coast.

*Oregon-California Trails Association
Nebraska State Historical Society
U.S. 26, vicinity of Ancient Bluff Ruins, c.
20 miles east of Bridgeport
Morrill County Marker 295*

MUD SPRINGS, TELEGRAPH & PONY EXPRESS STATION

This station is on the Oregon California trail cut off from Ovid Colorado, (Upper Crossing of the South Platte River); over to it's joining of the Oregon Trail on the South side of the North, Platte River, just west of Bridgeport, Nebraska. Called Mud Springs is located about 12 Miles Southeast of Bridgeport, in Morrill County, SW ¼, Sec. 31, T18N, R 49W. It is on Nebraska State Historical Society land, a one-acre tract, donated by Mrs. Etta A. Scherer as a Nebraska State Park, and is on the National Register of Historic Places. This was a home Telegraph station, the first since Julesburg, Colorado. Lt. Caspar Collins in 1864 made building ground plans, which are confirmed by an Archaeological search. The Pony Express and Stage station build is one in the same. A James McArdle was the station keeper when on August 4, 1865; Indians attacked the station, which is about 105 miles east of Fort Laramie, Wyoming. Col. William O. Collins, who was commanding the Western Sub-District of Nebraska Territory at Fort Laramie, was notified by telegraph of the attack, he immediately ordered Lieutenant Ellsworth, commanding Company II, Eleventh Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, at Camp Mitchell, (just west of Scottsbluff National Monument) to proceed without delay, with all the men he could spare, to the relief of Mud Springs Station; to travel all night, and if possible reach there by morning. He was there by daylight the next morning with thirty-six men, (August 5th), making the distance in twelve hours without stopping. Col. Collins left Fort Laramie with 120 men. His command reached Mud Springs in the forenoon of the same day. It had been a cold march that night and several men were frost bitten to the point of being unable to proceed any farther on to Mud Springs, so rested. He reached Mud Springs about 2 O'clock in the morning of August 6th. The rest of his command arrived about 8 Am the same morning.

A healthy exchange was pursued, but by around 2 pm the Indian fire slackened and they withdrew into the surrounding hills. The number of Indians engaged was estimated from 500 to 1,000. A field piece was ordered down from Fort Laramie, but in the end did no good.

The Indians headed east to Rush Creek, S.E. of Broadwater, Nebraska*. Their camp was found where they expected, Rush Creek Springs, but had recently been deserted. Col. Collins then went North to the North Platte River and near the mouth of Rush Creek. About a mile south of the river, he noted Indians on the north side of the river, going north, scattered over the plains between the bluffs and the river, grazing their horses. The women, children, and dogs had apparently gone on ahead into the sand hills on north. With Col Collins on the south side of the river, some of the rear guard of the Indian camp slipped back across the river south above and below where his position was. He found out that the size of the camp was more than he had anticipated, but regrouped for defensive movements of their rear guard.

** It is stated by Col. William O. Collins that the Indians retreated to Rush Creek, about 10 miles east of Mud Springs. However, distance and local history says it was on Cedar Creek, about 15 miles or so distance east of Mud Springs. There is however, a Rush Creek at an approximate distance of about 30 miles east, but the mentioned "springs" Col. Collins talks about is on Cedar Creek.*

About Sunrise on the morning of August 9 they began to be approached by an estimated 400 mounted warriors, but they found Col. Collins command ready for them. Finally they began to recross the river north, and were not pursued. About 2 o'clock that same afternoon they broke camp and dispersed, with Col. Collins and others going back to Mud Springs.**

*** Taken from: "Report of Lieut. Col. William O. Collins, Eleventh Ohio Cavalry, commanding Western Sub-District of Nebraska, report of Fort Laramie, Nebr. Ter., February 15, 1965".*

Today on top of a hill just south of the monument site can be seen pits, said to be the pits dug by Col. Collins command, according to historian, Paul Henderson, but are disputed by the late Charlie Cape, owner of the nearby house and farm, to be possible burial sites of fallen soldiers.

By Joe Fairfield



Mud Springs Pony Express Station

From 1859 through the late nineteenth century, Mud Springs Station, located near present-day Dalton, served travelers on the Julesburg “cutoff” connecting Lodgepole Creek to the main Oregon Trail. Mud Springs was constructed in 1859, originally as a stage station and used later as a Pony Express home station. It provided meals, lodging, and fresh horses. After the Pony Express ceased, the station operated as a stagecoach and telegraph station. In February of 1865 employees of Mud Springs were attacked by Sioux and Cheyenne warriors until troops from Fort Laramie and Fort Mitchell arrived.

Mud Springs, Nebraska State Historical Site, approximately 14.9 miles S.E. of Bridgeport, Nebraska. The scene looks to the South showing one of the hills in the background where much activity during the fight took place. The monument, (left center) is on the location of the Stage Station Site.

<http://www.nebraskahistory.org/histpres/nebraska/morrill.htm>



AMANDA LAMME

On June 23, 1850, twenty-eight-year-old Amanda Lamme, a California-bound emigrant, died of cholera and was buried near here in what is now private pastureland. She was the wife of M.J. Lamme of Boone County, Missouri, and mother of three daughters. The monument that marks her grave was erected in 1912. It was incorrectly engraved with the name Amanda Lamin.

Between 1842 and 1859 an estimated 20,000 emigrants, about 5 percent of the total, died along the overland trails. Cholera in 1849, 1859, and 1852 caused many adult deaths. Few children died from this. Malaria, smallpox, measles, and dysentery took a toll of children and adults alike.

Although wagons moved slowly, people were sometimes crushed beneath the wheels. Drownings were common at river crossings. Accidental shootings were frequent because many

travelers were unfamiliar with the use of firearms. Contrary to movie and television portrayals, few emigrants were killed by Indians. The risk of death probably was about the same for the emigrants as for the people who stayed at home.

Nebraska State Historical Society
National Park Service
Southeast of Bridgeport on U.S. 385
Morrill County Marker 349



COURTHOUSE & JAIL ROCK

Courthouse Rock was first noted by Robert Stuart in 1812 and quickly became one of the guiding landmarks for fur traders and emigrants. It is a massive monolith of Brule clay and Gering sandstone south of the trail, which was variously likened to a courthouse or a castle. A smaller feature just to the east was called the Jail House or Jail Rock. Courthouse Rock was the first of several impressive natural landmarks along the trail in western Nebraska.

In November of 1841, Rufus B. Sage recorded, "A singular natural formation, known as the Court House, or McFarlan's Castle . . . rises in an abrupt quadrilangular form, to a height of three or four hundred feet, and covers an area of two hundred yards in length by one hundred and fifty broad. Occupying a perfectly level site in an open prairie, it stands as the proud palace of Solitude, amid here boundless domains. Its position commands a view of the country for forty miles around and meets the eye of the traveler for several successive days, in journeying up the Platte."

Visit Courthouse/Jail Rock about six miles south of Bridgeport on State Route 88.

<http://www.nps.gov/oreg/planyourvisit/site6.htm>

COURTHOUSE AND JAIL ROCKS

Courthouse and Jail Rocks are two of the most famous landmarks of westward migration. Nearby passed the Oregon-California Trail, the Mormon Trail, the Pony Express Trail and the Sidney-Deadwood Trail. The rocks were vanguards of unforgettable scenic wonders that travelers would encounter farther west, including Chimney Rock's curious spire and the rugged heights of Scott's Bluffs.

Hundreds of overland emigrants mentioned Courthouse Rock in their diaries. Often called a "castle" or "solitary tower," the name Courthouse was first used in 1837. One 1845 traveler

described the rock as "resembling the ruins of an old castle [which] rises abruptly from the plain. . . It is difficult to look upon it and not believe that art had something to do with its construction.

The voyagers have called it the Courthouse; but it looks infinitely more like the Capitol." Courthouse and Jail Rocks, rising some 400 feet above the North Platte Valley, are erosional remnants composed of clay, sandstone and volcanic ash. The rocks are listed in the National Register of Historic Places and in the Nebraska Natural Areas Register.
Nebraska State Historical Society

*3/10 mile north of Seybolt Park on Nebraska 88
Morrill County Marker 371*

Camp Clarke Bridge And Sidney-Black Hills Trail

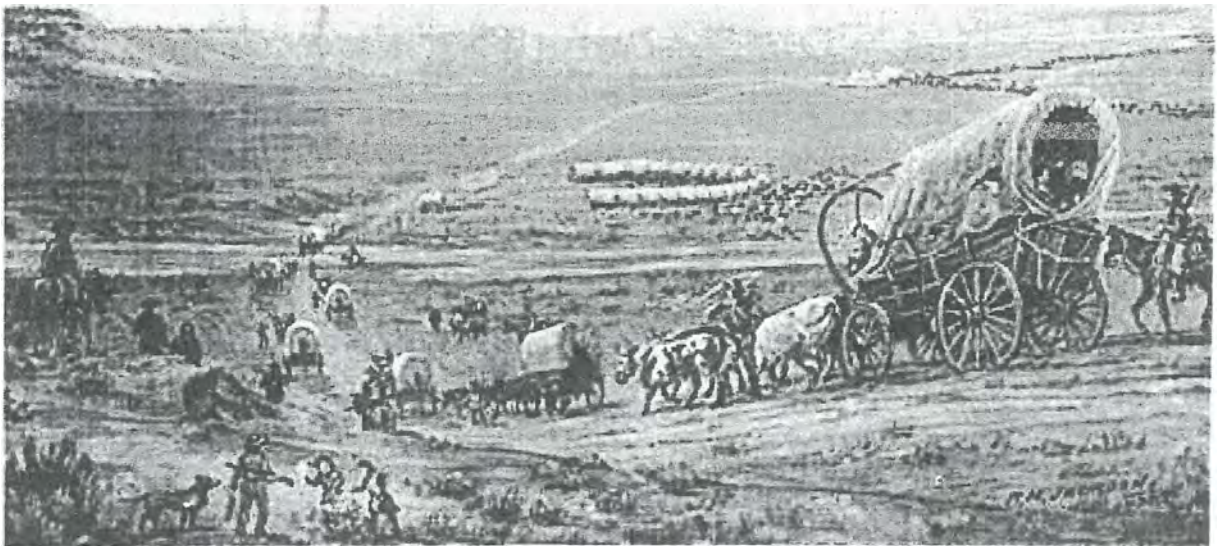
Just north of here the Camp Clarke bridge crossed the North Platte River. The bridge was built in the spring of 1876 by entrepreneur Henry T. Clarke to improve the trail from the Union Pacific Railroad at Sidney, Nebraska, to the gold mining towns in the Black Hills. The route first supplied the Sioux at Red Cloud Agency on the White River and the army at adjacent Camp Robinson; by 1876 the trail extended to Custer City and Deadwood in Dakota Territory. In 1878-79 some twenty-two million pounds of freight was shipped over the trail.

Clarke's bridge was about 2,000 feet long with 61 wooden trusses. Tolls of \$2 to \$6 were assessed on the hundreds of freight wagons, stagecoaches, and riders that crossed. A hamlet known as Camp Clarke, with a hotel, store, saloon, and postoffice, sprang up at the south end of the bridge. A log blockhouse stood on an island in the river near the north bank. Although travel on the trail declined after 1880, the bridge continued in local use until about 1900. The site is on the National Register of Historic Places.

*Bridgeport Community
Morrill County Visitors Committee
Nebraska State Historical Society
U.S. 26, West of Bridgeport, Milemarker 57.8
Morrill County Marker 391*

JACKSON PANORAMA

William Henry Jackson's "Approaching Chimney Rock" is one of the most famous and most used images depicting the way west. It is about five miles east of Chimney Rock on highway 26 and is best viewed heading west.



CHIMNEY ROCK

"at this place was a singular phenomenon which is among the curiosities of the country. It is called the Chimney. The lower part is a conical mound rising out of the naked plain; from the summit shoots up a shaft or column, about one hundred and twenty feet in height, from which it derives its name. The height of the whole . . . is a hundred and seventy five yards . . . and may be seen at the distance of upwards of thirty miles."

Capt. Benjamin Bonneville, 1832

A spire of solitary grandeur visible for miles to travelers of the onstretching prairie, Chimney Rock was a celebrated landmark on the Oregon Trail. Of all the curious rock formations along the trunkline of the trail, none drew more comment from 19th century travelers than this one. Yet to the emigrant it was more than a wonder of nature. As an oft-described milepost on a journey noted for its monotony the column eased the emigrant's way westward by heralding his progress and recalling the descriptions and sketches of earlier travelers.

Chimney Rock early became a guide for "mountain Men" - Rocky Mountain trappers and traders - on their seasonal travels between the Rockies and the Missouri River trading posts. The first white men to see the column were probably Robert Stuart and his small group of traders on their way back from Astoria in the Oregon Country in 1813. Fourteen years later, 1827, the first

recorded use of the name occurred in Joshua Pilcher's report on his journey up the Platte Valley to the Salt Lake rendezvous of the fur trappers.

Among chroniclers of the landmark are names famous in the annals of American expansion into the West: Captain Bonneville in 1832, William Anderson and William Sublette in 1834, the Congregational missionary Samuel Parker in 1835, the artist Alfred J. Miller in 1837, Father De Smet in 1840 and again in 1841. Charles Preuss of Frémont's expedition in 1842, members of Gen. Stephen Kearny's dragoons in 1845, the historian Francis Parkman in 1846, and the pioneer artist and photographer William Henry Jackson in 1866.

But it is in the journals of hundreds of covered-wagon emigrants that Chimney Rock's importance to the pioneers can best be gauged. From far out on the plains, wagon train outriders could see the spire. To them it signaled that the second phase of their long journey west - the difficult mountain passage - was about to begin. More immediately, the rock offered respite to weary emigrants heading for homes in Oregon, gold fiends in California, or Mormon havens in Utah. The spectacular shaft marked a good camping spot with a dependable spring. So intrigued were the emigrants that thousands clambered up the cone to carve their names on the tower. Many passersby on the north side of the river waded over just to climb "this great natural curiosity" Though no inscriptions are known to survive today, there is ample testimony that thousands of names once adorned the rock.

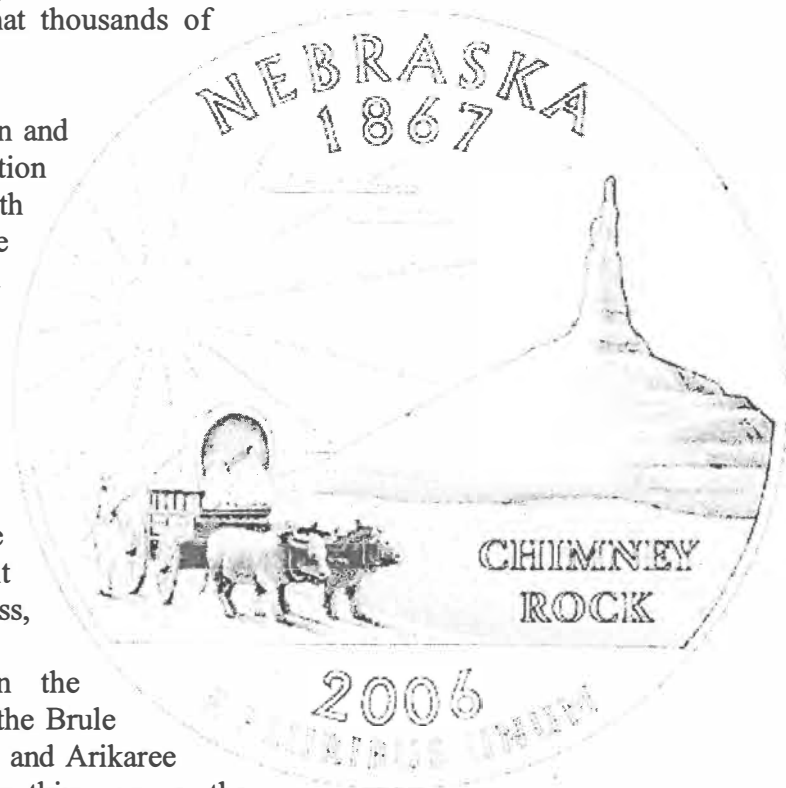
CHIMNEY ROCK

No single sight along the Oregon and Mormon trails attracted more attention than Chimney Rock, 1 1/2 miles south of here. Rising 475 feet above the Platte River, the natural tower served as a beacon to pioneers.

Tired travelers described it in many ways during the three to four days it was part of their horizon. For some it created mirage-like effects. Some judged it to be 50 feet high, others 700. Many tried to scale it, but none succeeded. Later it became the setting for pony express, telegraph, and stage stations.

Many pioneers speculated on the fragility of the tower. They feared the Brule clay with interlayers of volcanic ash and Arikaree sandstone would soon crumble to nothingness on the prairie.

Hundreds of names were scratched on the soft base. The names have washed away, but the tower remains, as do references in faded diaries that attest Chimney Rock was one of the celebrated landmarks on the pioneer trunklines to the west.



*Historical Markers Council
Southwest of Bayard on Nebraska 92
Morrill County Marker 1*

CHIMNEY ROCK

Rising 470 feet above the North Platte River Valley, Chimney Rock stands to the south as the most celebrated of all natural formations along the overland routes to California, Oregon, and Utah. Chimney Rock served as an early landmark for fur traders, trappers, and mountain men as they made their way from the Rockies to the Missouri River. To later emigrants, the solitary spire marked the end of plains travel and the beginning of the rugged mountain portion of their journey.

The tip of the formation is 325 feet above the base. Chimney Rock is composed of Brule Clay with interlayers of volcanic ash and Arickaree sandstone. Thousands of travelers carved their names in the soft base only to have these records disappear through the forces of nature. This eroded landmark is smaller than that which greeted early visitors to the area, but its presence for the generations of the near future is secure.

In 1941 the eighty acres containing the site were transferred to the Nebraska State Historical Society by the Roszel F. Durnal family. In 1956 Norman and Donna Brown deeded additional land to the Society. In that same year, Chimney Rock was designated a National Historic Site by the federal government.

*Nebraska State Historical Society
Junc. US 26 & Ne. 92, S.W. of Bayard
Morrill County Marker 152*

THE REBECCA WINTERS STORY

Seven miles from Scotts Bluff National Monument lies a solitary grave. This site marks the final resting place of Rebecca Winters, who died of cholera on August 15, 1852. Rebecca Winters was only one of thousands of people who succumbed to disease as they made their way west on the overland trails, but her grave is one of so very few that were marked and which remain identifiable today.

The normal practice for emigrants making their way west was to hide the graves of loved ones who died during the journey. Often graves were dug directly in the roadway and after the burial, wagons were driven over it to obscure all signs of it. This was not done out of a callous disregard for the deceased, but to reduce the likelihood that the grave might be disturbed by wild animals.

From what we know of Rebecca Winters, the fact that her grave was marked is not surprising. By all accounts she was a warm and caring person, deeply committed to her faith and her family. She was born in the state of New York in 1802, the daughter of Gideon Burdick, a Revolutionary War veteran. She and her husband Hiram, were early members of the Mormon Church, being baptized into that faith in June of 1833. As a result of their religious beliefs they endured severe persecutions at the hands of non-believers.

The Winters family was forced to relocate several times, making new homes in Ohio, Illinois and Iowa. In an effort to escape these persecutions, in June of 1852 they joined with other Mormons in making the great exodus to Utah. Unfortunately, somewhere along the Platte Valley, several people in their party contracted cholera. This was an especially deadly disease that is believed to have killed thousands of emigrants.

Sadly, Rebecca Winters was among those who fell victim to disease. Her husband and a close friend by the name of William Reynolds had the painful task of seeing to her burial, and their special efforts speak volumes to the affection they had for Rebecca. First they dug an

unusually deep grave. Then they placed a layer of wooden planks, apparently retrieved from abandoned wagons, on the bottom of the grave.

The story is told that her friends and family could not bear the thought of dirt touching her. However, there was not enough wood to build a coffin, so Rebecca's body carefully wrapped in blankets and then placed in the grave and a second layer of planks was placed over the body. The grave was then filled in. Undoubtedly a tearful burial service was held as the earthly remains of Rebecca Winters were laid to rest.



As a final token of his friendship, William Reynolds took a metal wheel rim and chiseled the following words, "Rebecca Winters, Age 50". In later years, Reynolds' daughter Ellis, related the story that her father had worked on the metal rim by the light of a candle she held for him. The rim was then bent into an oval shape, approximating the outline of a grave-stone, and was imbedded over the fresh grave. The Winters family then continued their westward journey and settled in Pleasant Grove, Utah.

It was this metal memorial, which withstood decades of weathering and countless prairie fires, that led to the rediscovery of the grave in 1899 when surveyors for the Burlington Northern railroad found it. For years, the story has persisted that out of respect for this grave, the route of the railroad tracks was altered to preserve the site. Whether or not this story is true, the tracks were laid only a few feet from the grave.

Recently, expanding rail traffic, combined with an increasing number of visitors to the gravesite gave rise to concerns for visitor safety. The Burlington Northern approached the

descendants of Rebecca Winters and asked if the grave might be relocated in a safer, more easily accessible location. After some deliberation, the Winters family approved of the plan.

On September 5, 1995, the exhumation began, with 65 members of the Winters family in attendance. Within a few hours, the digging by a team of archaeologists from the Nebraska State Historical Society revealed human skeletal remains. Soon the complete skeleton was unearthed, a testimony to the care taken in its burial so long ago.

The new site selected for Rebecca Winters' new grave is only 400 yards away just off Highway 26, and on October 14, 1995, the pioneer woman's remains, now in a mahogany casket, were once again laid to rest. 125 of her descendants attended the reburial, including her 16 year-old great-great-great-granddaughter - also named Rebecca Winters. Also in attendance was the great-granddaughter of William Reynolds - the man who had chiseled the metal marker at the original burial, 143 years before.

Scotts Bluff National Monument
Informational Sheet

REBECCA WINTERS

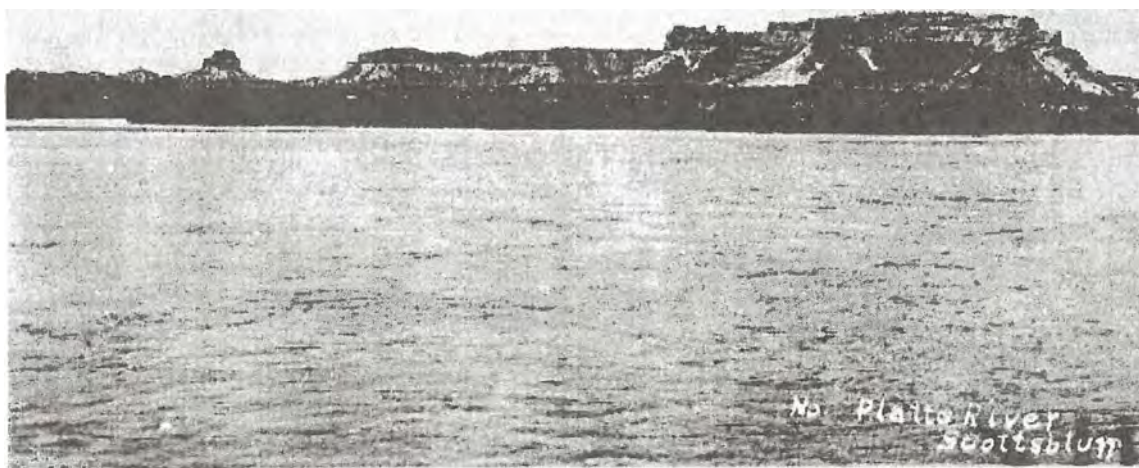
Rebecca Winters, daughter of Gideon Burdick, a drummer boy in Washington's army, was born in New York State in 1802. She was a pioneer in the Church of the Latter Day Saints, being baptized with her husband Hiram in June 1833.

Membership in the Church brought persecution in Ohio, Illinois and Iowa. In June 1852 the family joined others of their faith in the great journey to Utah. It was a pleasant trip across Iowa through June, but in the Platte Valley the dread cholera struck. Rebecca saw many of her friends taken by the illness, and on August 15 she was another of its victims. She was buried on the prairie near here with a simple ceremony.

A close friend of the family, William Reynolds, chiseled the words, "Rebecca Winters, Age 50" on an iron wagon tire to mark the grave. The family continued on with the wagon train and settled in Pleasant Grove, Utah.

Burlington Railroad surveyors found the crude marker and changed the right-of-way to save and protect the grave. In 1902 a monument was erected by Rebecca's descendants. Rebecca Winters is a symbol of the pioneer mother who endured great hardships in the westward movement.

*Scottsbluff Chamber of Commerce
Historical Land Mark Council
US 26, east of Scottsbluff
Scotts Bluff County Marker 21*



SCOTTS BLUFF

The North Platte River Valley, chiseled through the grassy plains of Nebraska and Wyoming has been a prairie pathway for at least 10,000 years. In ages past, this corridor led American Indians to places along the river where wandering bison herds stopped to drink. At one spot along the way, a huge bluff towered 800 feet above the valley floor. Its imposing size and adjacent badlands inspired the Indian name *Me-a-pa-te*, "hill that is hard to go around."

The early 19th century brought other hunters to the plains. Bands of trappers explored the network of rivers west of the Mississippi for hundreds of miles in search of "soft gold" - the pelts of fur-bearing animals that inhabited the mountains and valleys of the Northwest. The first whites to happen upon the North Platte route were seven of John Jacob Astor's men on their way back east from the Pacific. They reached *Me-a-pa-te* on Christmas Day 1812. By the next decade the bluff was a familiar sight to traders in caravans heading toward the Rockies where, for substantial profits, they exchanged supplies for furs. One fur company clerk, Hiram Scott, died near *Me-a-pa-te* in 1828, from then on the bluff had a new name.

Besides supplying fashionable easterners with felt hats, the traders established a trail through the mountains to the far west. Their old caravan route became the Oregon Trail, a 2,000-mile roadway to the Pacific lands. The rugged topography surrounding Scotts Bluff so intimidated wagoners that the original route bypassed the area well to the south. After 1850, during the peak of the California Gold Rush when emigrant numbers increased dramatically, travelers favored the recently improved trail through Mitchell Pass to the immediate south of the bluff, which subtracted 8 miles from the route - or almost a full day's travel.

In the early 1860s emigrants shared the Oregon Trail with mail and freight carriers, military expeditions, stage-coaches, and Pony Express riders. The few occasions when travelers

encountered Plains Indian war parties led to the establishment of Fort Mitchell in 1864. This fort, 2.5 miles northwest of Scotts Bluff, was an outpost of Fort Laramie.

By 1869 the Army had abandoned Fort Mitchell, emigrant traffic had waned, and a coast-to-coast telegraph strung through Mitchell Pass had long since replaced the overland mail routes. That year the Union Pacific and Central Pacific Railroads linked up at Promontory, Utah. The Oregon Trail quickly fell into disuse as a transcontinental throughway. By the next decade Scotts Bluff symbolized the past for one group of settlers and the future for another. The new wave of emigrants arrived not in covered wagons but in railroad cars. And the new emigrants came to stay.



Scotts Bluff National Monument/Mitchell Pass

Scotts Bluff was the last famous landmark along the “Great Platte River Road” in Nebraska.

In 1845, General Philip St. George Cooke marveled at the strange formation that rose before him. *“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. . . This morning marched three miles still nearer to that mysterious mountain . . . without being disenchanted of its colossal ruins and phantom occupants.”*

This immense sandstone and clay formation blocked wagon travel along the south bank of the North Platte River,

forcing early travelers to swing south and go through Robidoux Pass, a natural gateway in the great bluffs. In 1850, a shorter route was opened through Mitchell Pass, which stayed closer to the river and eliminated the eight-mile swing south.

A short section of deep and eroded trail ruts in Mitchell Pass has been developed as a walking and interpretive trail. A paved road allows visitors to drive to the top of the bluffs. From this vantage point, a magnificent panoramic view is available well into Wyoming. On a clear day, visitors can see Laramie Peak, almost 60 miles to the west. The National Park Service also maintains a museum, which contains many of William Henry Jackson’s paintings of the 19th century American West.

Scotts Bluff National Monument houses the world’s largest collection of original William Henry Jackson sketches, paintings, and photographs. Many are on display in the Visitor Center at Scotts Bluff. In addition, the entire collection can be found online at: www.whjcollection.com

<http://www.nps.gov/cali/planyourvisit/site3.htm>



Courtesy of William Henry Jackson Collection

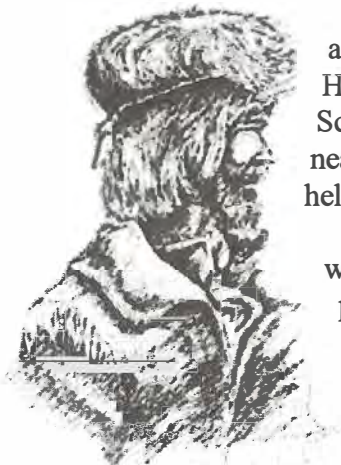
THE LIFE AND LEGEND OF HIRAM SCOTT

One of the most commonly asked questions posed by visitors to Scotts Bluff National Monument is, "How did the bluff get its name?"

The answer to that question is shrouded in mystery and has intrigued travelers through the North Platte river valley for almost two centuries.

WHO WAS HE?

Hiram Scott was born about 1805 in St. Charles County, Missouri, and was 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.



We do know that there was a man by the name of Hiram Scott who was employed by the American Fur Company. His name appears on the pay lists of that company in 1827, where he is listed as a clerk. We also know that his name does not appear in any of the company's papers after 1828.

Beyond this, little else is known with any certainty. In the early days of the fur trade, it was the practice of the various fur companies to send trappers into the Far West to gather pelts which would then be brought back to St. Louis and sold to eastern buyers.

THE FUR TRADE

Beaver furs were especially popular for making men's hats and collars for fancy coats. Muskrat, rabbit, and otter pelts were also marketable, but it was the beaver's fur which brought

top dollar. It was the seemingly endless supply of beaver pelts which drew young men such as Hiram Scott out into the frontier. As the business evolved, the fur companies realized that rather than send trappers out to catch and skin the beavers, it would be more efficient to obtain the pelts from the various Native American tribes in the West.

In exchange for the furs, the companies would offer manufactured items such as pots and pans, bolts of cloth, knives, axes, and firearms.

Each spring caravans of traders ventured into the frontier loaded with trade goods. They would meet with the tribesmen and independent fur trappers at pre-arranged sites to conduct their business. Each of these annual events came to be known as a fur trading "rendezvous."

Clerks such as Hiram Scott were necessary to keep track of the many transactions which were made at a rendezvous. Many different accounts had to be maintained, payrolls met and accurate inventories of the trade goods had to be kept. The responsibilities of a fur company clerk would have required a reliable, well-organized, and above all - a literate person.

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. Unfortunately, the details surrounding his death have been lost to history.

SCOTT'S DEATH

The basic story of Scott's death was first recorded by Warren A. Ferris, who traveled through the area in 1930. He related that during Scott's eastward journey, Scott had contracted a severe illness. Two comrades placed him in a boat and attempted to transport him downstream. However, for some unknown reason, the two men abandoned Scott on the north bank of the Platte River. The next spring, Scott's skeleton was found on the other side of the river, implying that he had somehow managed to cross to the opposite bank before he died.

A subtle variation on this story was recorded two years later by Washington Irving. Instead of being abandoned by just two men, the ailing Scott was supposedly left behind at the Laramie Fork by a larger party who feared for their lives due to starvation. The next summer, Scott's bones were found near the bluffs - 60 miles from where he had been left to die.

In 1834, missionary Jason Lee recorded a story about Hiram Scott that was very similar to those earlier versions, except that the pathetic Scott had traversed 100 miles before dying near the bluffs on the North Platte River.

THE STORY GROWS

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 others 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.

There has been some speculation that Hiram Scott was actually injured in an encounter with some Blackfoot Indians that took place at the 1828 rendezvous at Bear Lake, Utah. This has been used to explain why Scott became incapacitated on his journey back east, but as with most of the information about Hiram Scott, very little is known for certain.

SCOTT'S BLUFFS

Almost immediately after his death, the bluffs along the North Platte River came to be known as Scott's Bluffs. In 1830, the first wagons made the overland trip on the same route used by early fur traders like Hiram Scott, and the bluffs that bear his name served as a landmark for people making their way west.

The fur trade continued for a decade after Hiram Scott's death in 1828, but by 1840, the beaver had been trapped out and fashions changed. When men began wearing hats made of silk instead of beaver fur, the value of furs dropped. Twenty years later a demand for buffalo hides briefly rekindled fur trading on the high plains.

Hiram Scott's final resting place is not known. His remains were almost certainly found near the North Platte River, but the site has never been located. Today, a plaque dedicated to his memory is located along the North Overlook Trail on the summit of the bluff that bears his name.

Over the years, the geological features known as "Scotts Bluff's" 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 and a reminder of the tragic incident that took place nearly two centuries ago.

From Scotts Bluff National Monument webpage:
<http://www.nps.gov/scbl/historyculture/hscott.htm>

FORT MITCHELL

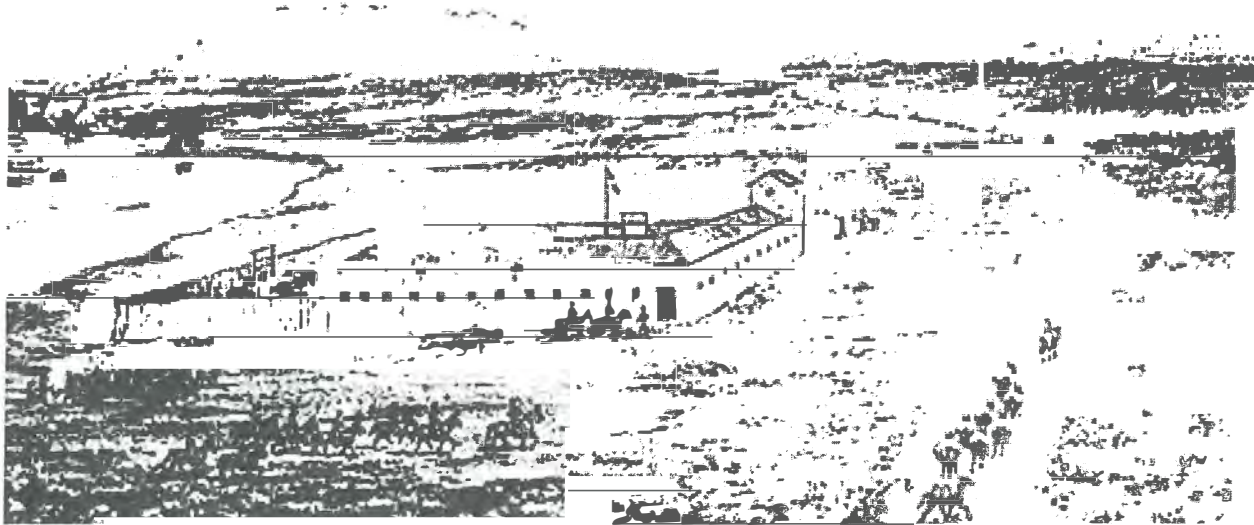
During America's westward expansion the United States Army established hundreds of small outposts throughout the frontier to protect settlers, maintain communication with the West Coast, and serve as staging areas for military campaigns. Some of these posts have become integral parts of American history. Fort Leavenworth, on the Missouri River, was the jumping-off point for emigrants on the overland trails; Fort Riley, Kansas, became the headquarters for the United States Cavalry, and Fort Laramie, Wyoming, was the primary military installation along the Oregon Trail for forty years. However, most other posts served less conspicuously, and then faded into obscurity. One such outpost was territorial Nebraska's Fort Mitchell.

The American Civil War brought a new significance to the western territories. The great overland roads such as the Santa Fe, Oregon and California Trails continued to carry vast numbers of emigrants and tons of freight; western goldfields were producing ore that helped to finance the Federal government's war effort; and the newly-erected transcontinental telegraph lines helped bind Westerners to the Union. But eastern battlefields drained regular Army soldiers from the frontier and left the vital western territories unprotected.

To provide a military presence in the West, the Federal government sent a few state-raised volunteer cavalry regiments to garrison forts that had been vacated by the regulars. Among these volunteers were the Eleventh Ohio Cavalry under the command of Colonel William O. Collins. The first contingent of Buckeye cavalymen arrived in Nebraska Territory in 1862 and marched west to Fort Laramie. There they were immediately assigned the tasks of patrolling, escorting freight wagons and stage coaches, and maintaining the telegraph lines along the Old Oregon Trail in central Wyoming. Eventually other units from Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas joined the Ohioans on the frontier.

Traffic over the roads continued unabated until early in August of 1864, when the plains erupted in a general Indian war that pitted the volunteer soldiers against Sioux, Arapaho, and Southern Cheyenne warriors. Determined to drive the Americans from their lands, Plains warriors swept out of Kansas and attacked homesteaders, stage stations and freight caravans all along the Platte River. For several weeks all traffic and communications over the Oregon Trail came to a halt.

In response to these depredations, several military expeditions sought out the warring tribes, but failed to bring them to battle. Unable to defeat the combined tribes on the battlefield, Brigadier General Robert Mitchell, commander of the District of Nebraska, worked to assure that the overland roads would never again be at the mercy of a hostile enemy. The general planned to fortify each stage station along the Oregon Trail and detail troops to protect them. He also decided to build two new forts at strategic sites along the Platte River.



To help defend the road that branched off the Oregon Trail and followed the South Platte to Denver, the first post . Was built near Julesburg, Colorado. For the first year of its existence this post was known as Fort Rankin, and had a garrison of soldiers from the Seventh Iowa Cavalry. It proved its value by withstanding two Indian assaults in the early weeks of 1865, and later served to protect workers during the construction of the Union Pacific Railroad.

The second post was placed along the North Platte River near Scotts Bluff, a prominent landmark on the Oregon Trail. Official records documenting Fort Mitchell's history are meager, but construction had begun by September 1, 1864, for on that date General Mitchell visited the site, The general's aide-de-camp noted that the men of the Eleventh Ohio's Company F were hard at work building the sod structure. Captain Jacob Shaman, first commander of the as yet unnamed post gave General Mitchell a tour of the site and described his plans for a sod stockade he hoped to have finished before winter set in. By the end of October most of the work had been completed and the post was named for the general who had ordered its construction.

Hostilities on the Plains intensified after November 29, 1864, when Colorado volunteer soldiers killed several hundred Cheyennes and Arapahos at Sand Creek, Colorado. Rather than bringing an end to the conflict, the massacre at Sand Creek resulted in renewed warfare and bloodshed when the infuriated tribesmen began a campaign of revenge. Convinced that the southern plains were no longer safe, several Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapaho bands moved their families north to spend the winter in the more remote Powder River region of Wyoming.

However, enroute they encountered military forces stationed along the overland roads. First, they crossed paths with the Seventh Iowa Cavalry at Fort Rankin. On February 2, 1865, the Indians stripped the town of anything they thought could be useful during their journey northward while the low: troopers and citizen of Julesburg watched help-lessly from the safety of

the fort. Two days later the Indians laid siege to a fortified telegraph station at Mud Springs. The Indians failed to cut the wires so the eleven desperate soldiers at the tiny outpost were able to use the telegraph to signal Fort Laramie for help.

The first cavalrymen to answer the call came from Fort Mitchell. Lieutenant William Ellsworth and 36 men of Company H, Eleventh Ohio Cavalry, rode all night and reached Mud Springs at dawn the next day. The siege continued until February 5 when Colonel Collins' relief column from Fort Laramie arrived after enduring the bitter cold during its 105 mile forced march. After some long distance skirmishing the warriors crossed the frozen North Platte River and continued northward.

Two soldiers were killed in the fighting at Mud Springs. and another sixteen were wounded. Ten men lost fingers and toes to frostbite during the march from Fort Laramie. The soldiers returned to their posts, where they buried their dead and tended to the wounded. In time, life at Fort Mitchell returned to normal. Traffic and communications on the overland routes resumed, but soldiers kept watch should the warriors return.

The spring of 1865 saw an abortive attempt at peace on the frontier. Tired of warfare, the Brule Sioux came into Fort Laramie and asked to be allowed to live in peace near that post. Welcoming the gesture, but unwilling to support the Sioux with rations shipped overland at great cost, the army decided to relocate the Indians farther east, where they could be fed more economically.

To accomplish this task, 100 men of the Seventh Iowa Cavalry were ordered to escort the Brule Sioux to Fort Kearny in central Nebraska. They and their charges left Fort Laramie on June 12, 1865, and set a slow pace so the Indian camp could travel in relative ease. To show their good faith, the soldiers made no effort to disarm the Sioux, and to avoid any possibility of confrontation the soldiers were not issued any ammunition. Unfortunately, the army did not take into consideration the suspicions of the Sioux, who were all too familiar with the fate of peaceful Indians at Sand Creek only six months earlier.

To make matters worse, the Sioux were to be relocated near their enemies, the Pawnee, and each day's march intensified the Sioux's fears that they were being led to their doom. The Indians' fears became so great that they decided to take drastic action. On the morning of June 15, 1865, after spending the night camped at Horse Creek, the soldiers were preparing to resume the march when they noticed that the Sioux were not making any effort to strike their tents. Captain William D. Fouts, commander of the escort, then rode over to the camp to ask about the delay.

As he approached the Sioux leaders he was shot out of the saddle. In the resulting confusion the Brules quickly abandoned their camp goods and moved to make their escape while the warriors fought a delaying action against the enraged soldiers. A mounted messenger was sent to Fort Mitchell with word of the revolt and a column was started for Horse Creek. Before relief arrived the Sioux crossed the North Platte River and the outnumbered soldiers were unwilling to cross the swollen river in pursuit.

For the next two years Fort Mitchell continued to serve as a reassuring bastion to travelers on the Oregon Trail. Hundreds of freight wagons, emigrant trains, and stage coaches passed Fort Mitchell. Detachments from the fort safely escorted them all, despite the fact that the post's garrison never exceeded one hundred men.

Conditions at Fort Mitchell were crude and demanding. Endless hours of patrol and escort duty were interrupted only by the constant maintenance of the sod walls and corrals. Poor sanitary conditions and a monotonous diet of hardtack and salt pork added to the soldiers'

hardships. Despite the poor living conditions, only one man is known to have died at Fort Mitchell.

After the Civil War, regular army soldiers returned to the West. One company of the Eighteenth Infantry was stationed at Fort Mitchell. Unfortunately the foot soldiers were helpless against Indian war parties, and on one occasion suffered the indignity of having 112 mules stolen from a train of freight wagons while they were camped within sight of the fort.

No official record of the post's abandonment exists, but Margaret Carrington, wife of Colonel Henry Barrington, made one of the last accounts of Fort Mitchell as an active military post. The Carringtons stopped briefly at Fort Mitchell in June of 1866, and she describes it as follows: "This is a sub-post of Fort Laramie of peculiar style and compactness. The walls of the quarters are also the outlines of the fort itself, and the four sides of the rectangle are respectively the quarters of officers, soldiers, horses, and the warehouse of supplies." Soon after, Fort Mitchell faded into obscurity. The sod walls quickly deteriorated, and in a short time wind and rain removed all signs that the post had ever existed.

Today, plows turn up occasional reminders of Fort Mitchell in the form of rusted metal artifacts. Although no physical indications of the post remain, nearby Mitchell Pass preserves the name, and serves as a reminder that for three years, Fort Mitchell stood guard along the Oregon Trail during an important period in American history.

Scotts Bluff National Monument
Information Sheet

FORT MITCHELL, 1864-1867

Mitchell Pass and the city of Mitchell, Nebraska, derive their names from a military post built near here during the Indian Wars. No trace of the sod structure remains at the site on the North Platte River bend northwest of Scott's Bluff. It was named in honor of General Robert B. Mitchell, who ordered the establishment of several sub-stations along the Great Platte River Road between Julesburg and South Pass.

Fort Mitchell was constructed and manned in the autumn of 1864 by Company "H" of the Eleventh Ohio Volunteer Cavalry under Captain J. S. Shuman. In February 1865 they helped defend Mud Springs Station against an attack by Cheyenne. In June 1865 they rescued Fort Laramie troops ambushed by Sioux near Horse Creek. They chased Indians who tore down telegraph lines and attacked wagon trains and stage coaches.

Army records are meager, but there are eyewitness descriptions of the fort by Eugene Ware, John Bratt, and Margaret Carrington. An official ground plan and a sketch of 1866 by William H. Jackson reveal a stockade with sally-port, firing loop-holes, and a sentinel tower. A nearby "road ranch" served as the Scott's Bluff stage station. Fort Mitchell was abandoned after the Fort Laramie peace conference of 1867.

*Mitchell Bicentennial Committee
Nebraska State Historical Society
1/2 mile south of junc. of Hwys. 92-29 E of Mitchell
Scotts Bluff County Marker 190*

ROBIDOUX PASS

This narrow pass through the Wildcat Hills south of the North Platte valley, near the present-day town of Gering, witnessed the passing of thousands of emigrants traveling the Oregon-California Trail between 1843 and 1851. Robidoux Pass provided travelers with their first glimpse of the Rocky Mountains and offered a good supply of fuel and spring water. The earliest travelers using the pass were probably fur traders in the 1820s and 1830s. East of the pass lies

the site of a trading post established about 1847 by a Missourian named Joseph Robidoux. Robidoux sold a variety of goods and provided blacksmithing services. Following the opening of Mitchell Pass in 1851, Robidoux Pass and the trading post fell into disuse.

<http://www.nebraskahistory.org/histpres/nebraska/scotsblf.htm>

HORSE CREEK

“THE GREAT SMOKE”

From all directions they came in late summer 1851--Plains Indian tribes, summoned by government officials so their chiefs could smoke the peace pipe and sign a treaty with representatives of “The Great Father.” Never before had so many American Indians assembled to parley with the white man. (Estimates range from 8,000 to 12,000.) It was perhaps history’s most dramatic demonstration of the Plains tribes’ desire to live at peace with the whites.

The tribes had been invited to assemble at Fort Laramie, but a shortage of forage for their thousands of horses caused the parley to be moved downstream. Because some tribes had been at war for generations, most Indian camps were widely spaced to minimize contact. About 270 soldiers were present to help keep the peace. However, a spirit of friendliness prevailed.

Among those helping bring the tribes together were mountain man and trailblazer Jim Bridger and Jesuit Father Peter De Smet, the beloved “Blackrobe” who worked 50 years among the Indians.

*Nebraska State Historical Society
One mile west of Morrill on U.S. 26
Scotts Bluff County Marker 369A*

THE HORSE CREEK TREATY

The treaty was proposed by former fur trader Thomas Fitzpatrick, Upper Platte Indian agent, supported by David D. Mitchell, superintendent of Indian Affairs in St. Louis. The treaty provided that the government would give the tribes \$50,000 a year in goods for 50 years for damages caused by emigrants bound for Oregon, California and Utah. In return the Indians would allow free passage on the emigrant trails, permit forts to be built on their land, and pledged peaceful settlement of intertribal disputes.

Signing were such chiefs as White Antelope (Cheyenne), Little Owl (Arapaho), Big Robber (Crow) and Conquering Bear, whom the whites persuaded the Sioux to elect as head chief. Assiniboine, Mandan, Gros Ventre and Arikara chiefs also signed. The Shoshone traveled over 400 miles but were not asked to sign because they were not from the Plains.

With few exceptions, the tribes honored the treaty until 1864, when the whites’ demand for land pressured the Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapaho into warfare, ending the hope for peace which had prompted “The Great Smoke.”

*Nebraska State Historical Society
One mile west of Morrill on U.S. 26
Scotts Bluff County Marker 369B*

FORT LARAMIE

Fort Laramie, the military post, was founded in 1849 when the army purchased the old Fort John for \$4000, and began to build a military outpost along the Oregon Trail.

For many years, the Plains Indians and the travelers along the Oregon Trail had coexisted peacefully. As the numbers of emigrants increased, however, tensions between the two cultures began to develop. To help insure the safety of the travelers, Congress approved the establishment

of forts along the Oregon Trail and a special regiment of Mounted Riflemen to man them. Fort Laramie was the second of these forts to be established.

The popular view of a western fort, perhaps generated by Hollywood movies, is that of an enclosure surrounded by a wall or stockade. Fort Laramie, however, was never enclosed by a wall. Initial plans for the fort included a wooden fence or a thick structure of rubble, nine feet high, that enclosed an area 550 feet by 650 feet. Because of the high costs involved, however, the wall was never built. Fort Laramie was always an open fort that depended upon its location and its garrison of troops for security.



Fort Laramie in 1867.

From a sketch by Anton Schoenborn.

http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/hb/20/images/hh20ml.jpg

In the 1850s, one of the main functions of the troops stationed at the fort was patrolling and maintaining the security of a lengthy stretch of the Oregon Trail. This was a difficult task because of the small size of the garrison and the vast distances involved. In 1851, a treaty, the Treaty of 1851, was signed between the United States and the most important tribes of the Plains Indians. The peace that it inaugurated, however, lasted only three years. In 1854, an incident involving a passing wagon train precipitated the Grattan Fight in which an officer, an interpreter, and 29 soldiers from Fort Laramie were killed. This incident was one of several that ignited the flames of a conflict between the United States and the Plains Indians that would not be resolved until the end of the 1870s.

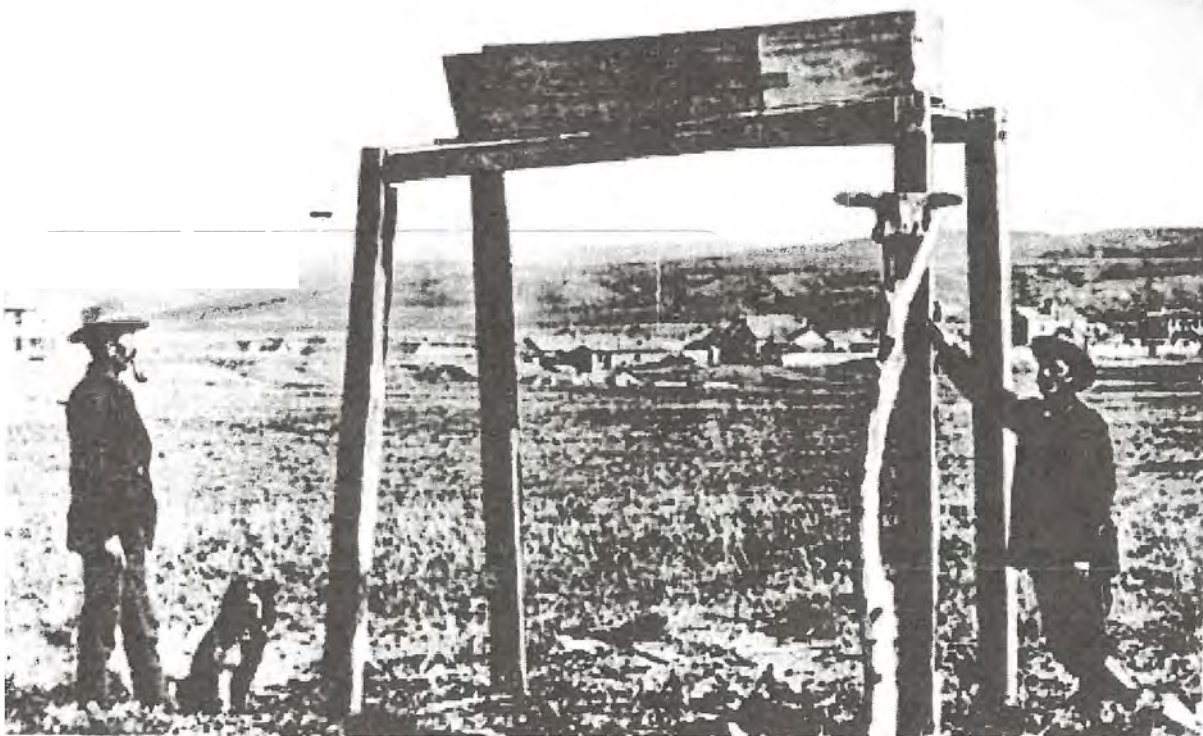
The 1860s brought a different type of soldier to Fort Laramie. After the beginning of the Civil War, most regular army troops were withdrawn to the East to participate in that conflict, and the fort was garrisoned by state volunteer regiments, such as the Seventh Iowa and the Eleventh Ohio. The stream of emigrants along the Oregon trail began to diminish, but the completion of the transcontinental telegraph line in 1861 brought a new responsibility to the soldiers. Inspecting, defending, and repairing the “talking wire” was added to their duties. During the latter part of the 1860s, troops from Fort Laramie were involved in supplying and reinforcing the forts along the Bozeman Trail, until the Treaty of 1868 was signed.

Unfortunately, the Treaty of 1868 did not end the conflict between the United States and the Plains Indians and, by the 1870's, major campaigns were being mounted against the plains tribes. The discovery of gold in the Black Hills, in 1874, and the resultant rush to the gold fields had violated some of the terms of the treaty and antagonized the Sioux who regarded the Hills as sacred ground. Under leaders such as Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull, they and their allies chose to fight to keep their land. In campaigns such as the ones in 1876, Fort Laramie served as a staging area for troops, a communications and logistical center, and a command post.

Conflicts with the Indians on the Northern Plains had abated by the 1880s. Relieved of some of its military function, Fort Laramie relaxed into a Victorian era of relative comfort. Boardwalks were built in front of officers' houses and trees were planted to soften the stark landscape.

By the end of the 1880s, the Army recognized that Fort Laramie had served its purpose. Many important events on the Northern Plains had involved the Fort, and many arteries of transport and communication had passed through it. Perhaps the most important artery, however, the Union Pacific Railroad, had bypassed it to the South. In March of 1890, troops marched out of Fort Laramie for the last time. The land and buildings that comprised the Fort were sold at auction to civilians.

National Park Service Web Page
<http://www.nps.gov/archive/foia/laramie.htm>



The grave of Spotted Tail's daughter near Fort Laramie, about 1881.

Chronological List Of Fort Laramie History

1812 - Robert Stuart and the returning Astorians are the first recorded white men to pass by what will become Fort Laramie. While camped at the mouth of the Laramie River they leave the first recorded description of the area. Without knowing it they discover what will become the Oregon Trail.

1821 - Jacque Laramie is killed on the Laramie River somewhere near the present site of Fort Laramie. Several geographical landmarks later take his name.

1830 - Smith, Jackson, and Sublette haul supplies to the annual rendezvous by wagon, thus becoming the first to pass the future site of Fort Laramie and the first on what will become the Oregon Trail.

1834 - William Sublette and Robert Campbell establish a log-stockaded fort at the confluence of the Laramie and North Platte rivers to trade with the Indians, and name it Fort William (the first Fort Laramie).

1835 - Fort William is sold to Jim Bridger, William Fitzpatrick, and Milton Sublette.

1836 - Fort William is sold to the American Fur Company.

1836 - Elizabeth Spaulding and Narcissa Whitman visit Fort Laramie, and become the first white women to pass over the Oregon Trail, and the first known white women in the future state of Wyoming.

1841 - A rival fort, adobe-walled Fort Platte is built on the Platte River within a mile of Fort William. In response to the construction of Fort Platte, the American Fur Company replaces deteriorating log Fort William with a new fort, Fort John, also made of adobe (the second Fort Laramie).

1841 - The Bidwell-Bartelson party passes Fort Laramie enroute to California, the first true wagon train bound for California.

1842 - Lieutenant John C. Fremont passes on his first exploratory trip to the Rockies.

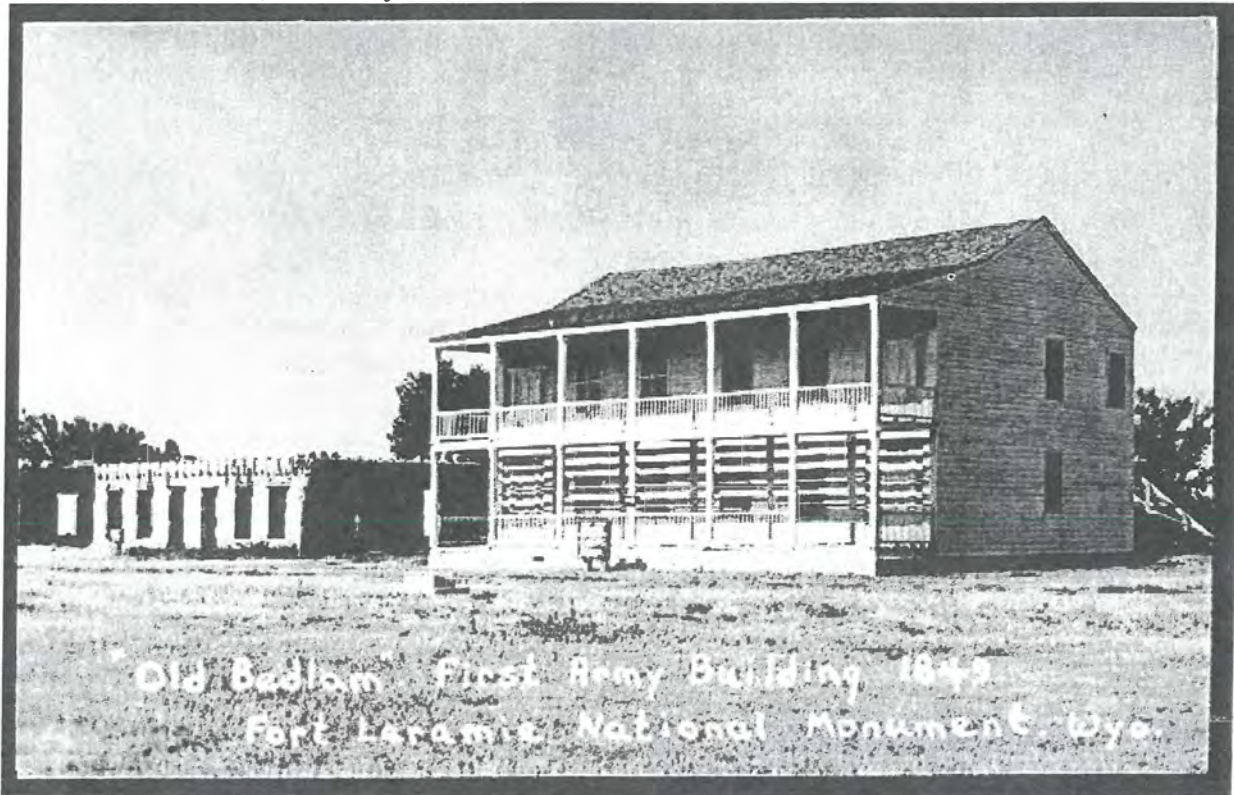
1843 - The Cow Column passes Fort Laramie. This train represented the first of the wagon trains to Oregon.

1845 - Colonel Stephen W. Kearny councils with the Indians at Fort Laramie to insure safe passage for the growing tide of emigrants traveling along the trail. This is the first peace council at Fort Laramie.

1845 - Fort Platte is abandoned

1846 - The Donner Party passes through Fort Laramie on their fateful trip to the west.

1847 - Brigham Young leads the first of the Mormon emigrants through Fort Laramie in search of their Zion, the valley of the Great Salt Lake.



1849 - Fort John (Fort Laramie) is purchased by the Army for \$4,000 on June 26th. The first garrison is comprised of two companies of Mounted Riflemen and one company of the 6th Infantry.

1850 - The high tide of emigration passes Fort Laramie, nearly 50,000 people.

1851 - Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 (Horse Creek Treaty) is signed.

1853 - The Platte Ferry, just north of Fort Laramie, is seized by the Sioux. A skirmish results between Fort Laramie soldiers and the Sioux with the result of three Indians killed, three wounded, and two taken prisoner.

1854 - The Grattan Fight takes place on August 19th, after Brevet Second Lieutenant Grattan tries to arrest a Miniconjou brave for the killing of an emigrant's cow, eight miles east of Fort Laramie. All whites at the fight died. This is the first major battle of the Northern Plains Indian Wars.



1856 - Mormon emigrants pass Fort Laramie using "handcarts," the first of many handcart pioneers.

1857 - A large column of troops move through Fort Laramie enroute to Utah to suppress the rebellious Mormons.

1860 - April 6th, the Pony Express starts its express mail delivery through Fort Laramie.

1861 - The continental telegraph line is completed. The telegraph runs through Fort Laramie. The Pony Express ceases operations.

1864 - The only recorded attack on Fort Laramie. A scout detachment unsaddled their mounts on the Parade ground and approximately 30 warriors dashed through the fort, stealing the command's horses. No injuries or loss of life were reported.

1865 - Powder River Expedition is organized at Fort Laramie under General Patrick E. Connor to punish Indians in the region.

1866 - Peace Council is held at Fort Laramie to secure the right to use the Bozeman Trail. The peace council fails after Colonel Henry B. Carrington arrives with troops to establish Bozeman Trail forts. Start of Red Cloud's War.

1866 - Fetterman Fight takes place on December 21, and 81 soldiers die at the battle. John Phillips and Daniel Dixon start their ride to Deer Creek Station. Phillips continues on to Fort Laramie, arriving (so goes the legend) during a Christmas Night party at Old Bedlam.

1868 - Red Cloud wins his war with the government and a peace council is held at Fort Laramie, resulting in the signing of the Treaty of 1868, which sets aside the Great Sioux Reservation.

1874 - Gold is discovered in the Black Hills, causing a rush of miners to travel through Fort Laramie up the Cheyenne-Deadwood Trail.

1875 - A bridge is built over the North Platte River, the first iron bridge in Wyoming.

1876 - The campaign of 1876 begins, involving troops from Fort Laramie under the command of General George Crook. Fort Laramie troops fight in the Reynolds Fight of March 17th, and the Battle of the Rosebud on June 17th.

1883 - Last cavalry company leaves Fort Laramie, only infantry troops remain.

1889 - Order to abandon Fort Laramie is issued August 31.

1890 - Last garrison of the post marches away on March 2nd. A public auction is held on April 9th to sell the remaining property and buildings. On April 20th the fort is officially abandoned.

National Park Service Web Page
<http://www.nps.gov/archive/foia/chrono.htm>

GRATTAN FIGHT

Location: Goshen County, between an unimproved road and the North Platte River, about 3 miles west of Lingle.

Only slightly more than a century ago an incident occurred at this site that marked the beginning of 3-1/2 decades of intermittent warfare on the northern Plains. On a summer afternoon in 1854 a young lieutenant, belligerently seeking to arrest a Sioux Indian for a trivial offense, forced a fight. By sundown all the troops but one were dead. An enraged American public, unaware of the actual circumstances, demanded action. The Sioux and other northern tribes, with whom relations rapidly deteriorated, made numerous raids along the Oregon-California Trail. The next year Col. William S. Harney led a punitive expedition (1855-56) onto the Plains from Fort Kearny, Nebr. The Indian wars, a bitter, generation-long struggle, had begun.



During the years just preceding the Grattan Fight, despite the waves of settlers passing west over the trail, the northern Plains Indians had been relatively peaceful. In July and early August 1854 about 600 lodges of Brule, Miniconjou, and Oglala Sioux, as well as those of a few Northern Cheyennes, dotted the North Platte River Valley for several miles east of Fort Laramie. This large concentration of Indians, which could easily have overwhelmed the fort's feeble garrison, was impatiently awaiting the delayed annuity issue to which they were entitled by the Fort Laramie Treaty (1851). On August 18 a Miniconjou named High Forehead, visiting Conquering Bear's Brule camp, shot and ate a cow belonging to a Mormon emigrant.

That same day Conquering Bear visited Fort Laramie's commanding officer, Lt. Hugh B. Fleming, and offered to make amends. Rejecting these overtures, he decided to arrest High Forehead, an act in violation of existing treaties. The commander assigned the mission to John L. Grattan, a rash 24-year-old lieutenant fresh out of West Point, and gave him broad discretionary powers.

The next afternoon Grattan, an interpreter named Lucien Auguste, and 29 infantrymen set out with a wagon and two small artillery pieces. They stopped first at the Gratiot Houses fur trading post and then at James Bordeaux' trading post, 300 yards from the Brule camp and 8 miles southeast of Fort Laramie. Over Grattan's protests, at both places the interpreter, who had become intoxicated, abused and threatened loitering Indians.

A series of conferences between Grattan and Conquering Bear and other chiefs culminated in front of High Forehead's lodge, where Grattan finally moved his troops despite the warnings of the alarmed Bordeaux. The chiefs made new offers to pay for the cow, pleaded with the unyielding Grattan to postpone action until the Indian agent arrived, and continued to urge the obstinate High Forehead to surrender. Conquering Bear explained that High Forehead was a guest in his village and was not subject to his authority. Aggravating matters was the arrival of some impetuous young Oglala warriors, who in defiance of Grattan's orders had hurried down from their village. Distrusting Auguste's translation of what was being said and seeking to avoid a clash, Conquering Bear tried but failed to obtain the translation services of Bordeaux. As the situation became more tense, the Brule women and children fled from the camp toward the river.

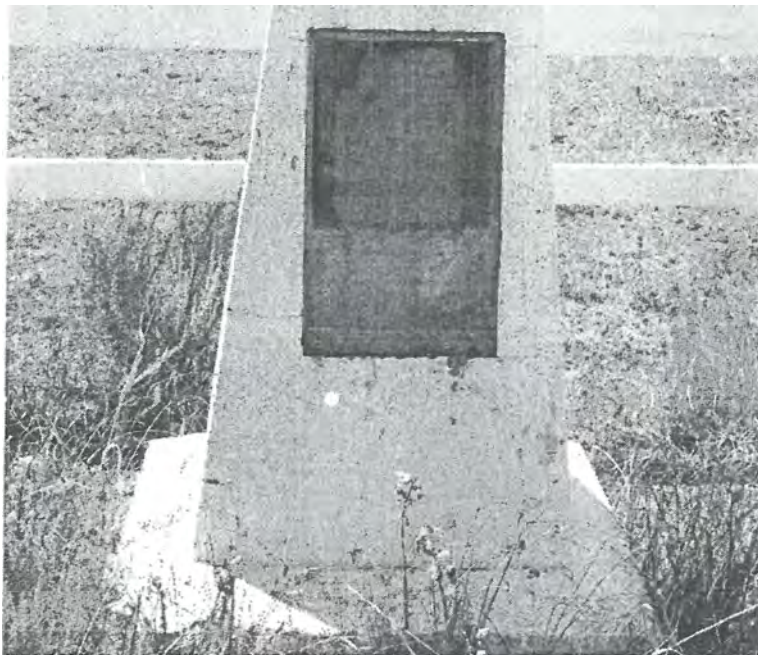
At some point a few shots were fired and an Indian fell, but the chiefs cautioned the warriors not to reciprocate. Convinced nevertheless of the need for an even greater show of force, Grattan ordered his men to fire a volley. Conquering Bear slumped to the ground mortally wounded. Arrows flew. Once Grattan fell, his command panicked and fought a running battle back along the Oregon-California Trail. Finally the mounted Indians, forcing the foot soldiers onto level ground, overwhelmed them. All died except for one mortally wounded man who managed to make it back to Fort Laramie.

The Indian chiefs, feeling that the Great White Father would realize that the soldiers had been partly at fault and would forgive the Indians for the battle but not an attack on Fort Laramie, restrained their warriors. Within a few days they did, however, ransack Gratiot Houses of its goods as a substitute for their annuities and then departed from the North Platte River Valley. Life at the fort slowly settled into the familiar routine, but the old security was gone.

The site, privately owned and used for ranch operations, is marked by a stone monument, on the north side of the road. Extensive modern alterations of the terrain for irrigation purposes prevent the identification of the exact positions of the participants in the fight. The site of the cairn, where the enlisted men are buried, is about 200 yards west of the probable site of the Bordeaux trading post, marked by ground debris. Grattan's body is interred at Fort Leavenworth,

Kans. The likely site of Gratiot Houses, also debris covered, is located a few rods from the river about a quarter mile east of the headgates of the Gratiot Irrigation Ditch.

http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/soldier/sitec19.htm#148



Mary Homsley

http://wyoshpo.state.wy.us/trailsdemo/mary_homsley.htm

Mary Homsley died here in 1852 after a short but difficult journey. She gave birth to a son somewhere in Nebraska which left her in a weakened state. Soon thereafter, she and the child both developed measles. Probably seeking medical care, her wagon train decided to cross the river to go to Fort Laramie. The crossing was a disaster. Mary and the child were both thrown into the river. Although they were rescued, they became severely chilled and Mary died the next day, June 10.

Her broken sandstone headstone was discovered in 1925 by some passing cowboys. A story on the discovery, "Who Was Mary Homsley?," ran in an Oregon newspaper where Mary's daughter, Lura, then 76 years old, saw it. Lura had been three years old when her mother died and she remembered the details with remarkable clarity. She had spent a

lifetime wondering where her mother was buried and, while she was never able to make the journey to visit the grave, she died knowing her mother would not be forgotten by history.

National Park Service Comprehensive Management Plan

The original headstone has been placed in a large stone obelisk and encased in glass. A wooden fence protects the site which has also been marked by the Oregon-California Trails Association.

Private Ownership

Access open to public.

[Owned by Charles Potter, Fort Laramie, WY 82212, (307) 837-2797.]

Directions

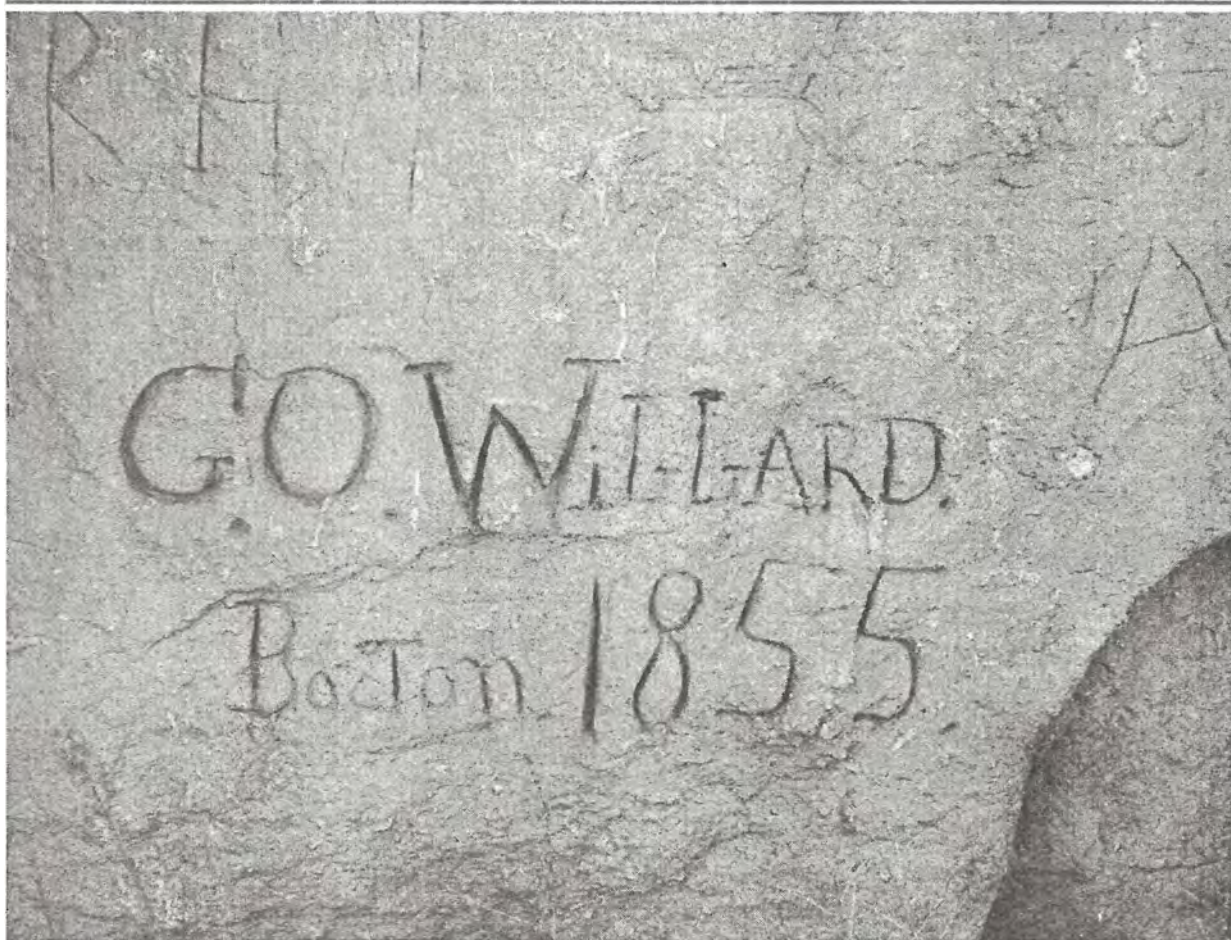
Goshen County, Wyoming. T26N/R64W

From the river bridge between the town of Fort Laramie and Fort Laramie National Historic Site, travel west .7 mile and turn right on a county gravel road. In 1.2 miles, turn right. The grave is another .2 mile north.

From the Fort Laramie NHS entrance, the road leading to the grave is a left turn in one mile. While rugged, the route is passable by passenger vehicles. Signs erected by the Wyoming Bureau of Land Management provide general directions to both the grave and the “Bedlam Ruts,” further up the hill above and to the west of the Homsley grave. The “Bedlam Ruts” are administered by the BLM.

Additional Information:

An interview with Mary Homsley’s daughter, Lura Homsley Gibson, can be found in *The Lockley Files: Conversations with Pioneer Women*, by Fred Lockley, edited by Mike Helm (Eugene, OR: Rainy Day Press, 1981), pp. 173-76.



REGISTER CLIFF

Register Cliff, located 4½ miles south of Guernsey Wyoming and just 8 miles west of Fort Laramie, is one of the more famous landmarks of the overland trails. Here many thousands of pioneers carved their names into a soft sandstone cliff overlooking the river valley. In reality, these carvings are little more than “emigrant graffiti”. Several hundred of these signatures are still visible today. This is one of many such “signature rocks” that were used by travelers in the mid 1800s. Others include Independence Rock and Courthouse Rock. This area also marked the beginnings of the Rocky Mountains and the hardest parts of the trail. This grassy area was a favored stopping point for many wagon trains.

Today a paved road leads through Guernsey and across the river to the cliffs. A short hiking trail leads visitors from the parking lot to a fenced area of the cliff that preserves many of the historic carvings. Several interpretive signs point out famous names and the history of the area. There is also a pioneer cemetery and trail markers near the parking area.

This cliff marked mile 658 of the trek to Oregon. Just west of this point, the Oregon trail climbed out of the river valley to head across the grassy high plains and to avoid a series of canyons along the river. Guernsey State Park and nearby Glendo State Recreation areas are favorite reservoirs that fill the canyon areas today. Some of the best preserved wagon “trail ruts” are just a short distance away.

http://www.wyonebtourism.com/NorthP/Register_Cliff/default.htm



Lucinda Rawlins Grave

http://wyoshpo.state.wy.us/trailsdemo/lucinda_rawlins.htm

At the base of Deep Rut Hill and across the modern highway, perched above the Platte River, is the improved gravesite of Lucindy Rollins. Rollins, who it is believed started her journey from Dayton, Ohio, died here in June of 1849. She was probably heading for California. Her cause of death is unknown.

The existing obelisk was erected in 1934 by the Historical Landmark Commission of Wyoming and “dedicated to the pioneer women of Wyoming.” The original headstone was placed behind glass in a niche in the obelisk. Unfortunately, many years ago, the monument was vandalized and the headstone removed. (It was supposedly thrown into the river.)

National Park Service Comprehensive Management Plan

Public Ownership (Wyoming National Guard)

Directions : Goshen County, Wyoming. T26N/R66W

Located across from Deep Rut Hill. Clearly visible on the crest of the opposite hill upon leaving the parking lot.

GUERNSEY RUTS [Deep Ruts]

Oregon Trail Ruts

National Historic Landmark

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places 5/13/66

Worn from two to six feet into an eroded sandstone ridge located on the south side of the North Platte River about one-half mile south of the town of Guernsey, Wyoming, the Oregon Trail Ruts provide striking physical evidence of the route followed by thousands of Americans in their migration westward across the Plains between 1841 and 1869. The first recorded use of what was to become the Oregon Trail occurred in 1812, when Robert Stuart and six companions followed the route in returning to the East from Fort Astoria in Oregon. In the succeeding years, the route was used by numerous traders, trappers, and missionaries; but it was not until 1841 that the first wagon train, that of the Bartleson-Bidwell party, moved westward over the Trail. Over 100 emigrants followed the Trail west in 1842, and over 900, in 1843. In the ensuing years the numbers of emigrants steadily increased, and the Oregon Trail became a clearly defined and deeply rutted road across the country. With the completion of the Union Pacific Railroad in 1869, use of the Trail as an overland route to the Pacific rapidly declined, although sections of it continued to be used locally for many years. The combined effects of wagon wheel wear and cutting to ease passage over a rough place in the road, these ruts near Guernsey are probably the most prominent along the Oregon Trail and are unsurpassed in their clarity and integrity.

Wyoming State Parks and Cultural Resources
<http://wyoshpo.state.wy.us/oregon.htm>

Guernsey Ruts (Deep Rut Hill) - Guernsey, Wyoming

At this site, where the trail was forced away from the river and crossed a ridge of soft sandstone, the track is worn to a depth of five feet, creating some of the most spectacular ruts remaining along the entire length of the Oregon-California Trail. The geography of the area dictated that practically every wagon that went west crossed the ridge in exactly the same place, with impressive results.

Located about three miles south of Guernsey.

<http://www.nps.gov/oreg/planyourvisit/site7.htm>



OTHER THINGS OF INTEREST

The Geography of Nebraska

http://www.netstate.com/states/geography/ne_geography.htm

Longitude & Latitude: Longitude: 95° 25'W to 104°W; Latitude: 40°N to 43°N

Length x Width: Nebraska is about 430 miles long and 210 miles wide.

Geographic Center: The geographic center of Nebraska is located in Custer County, 10 miles NW of Broken Bow. (Longitude: 99° 51.7'W, Latitude: 41° 31.5'N)

Borders: Nebraska is bordered by South Dakota on the north and Colorado and Kansas on the south. On the east, Nebraska is bordered by Iowa and Missouri. On the west, Nebraska is bordered Colorado and Wyoming.

Total Area: Nebraska covers 77,358 square miles, making it the 16th largest of the 50 states.

Land Area: 76,878 square miles of Nebraska are land areas.

Water Area: 481 square miles of Nebraska are covered by water.

Highest Point: The highest point in Nebraska is Panorama Point, [Southwestern Kimball County] at 5,424 feet above sea level.

Lowest Point: The lowest point in Nebraska is 840 feet above sea level at the Missouri River in southeastern Richardson County.

Mean Elevation: The Mean Elevation of the state of Nebraska is 2,600 feet above sea level.

Major Rivers: Missouri River, Niobrara River, Platte River (Official State River, 1998), Republican River

Major Lakes: Lewis and Clark Lake, Harlan County Lake, Lake C.W. McConaughty

THE LAND

In the center of the continental United States, Nebraska is a land of plains; the Disected Till Plains in the eastern part of the state rise to the Great Plains in the north central and northwest parts of the state.

The Disected Till Plains cover the eastern fifth of Nebraska. This area consists of rolling hills criss-crossed by streams and rivers. The Disected Till Plains are farm country and fields of corn, soybeans, sorghum grain, and other crops blanket the region. The northern section is referred to as the Loess Hills. Loess is a buff to yellowish-brown loamy dust that is found in North America. Loess is distributed across an area by the wind.

The Great Plains of Nebraska lie to the west of the Till Plains and extend across the state into Wyoming and Colorado. Loess covers the central and south-central Great Plains. This area can be rough and hilly. A relatively flat area in the southeastern section, interspersed with lakes and wetlands, is farmed intently. This area, about 7,000 square miles, is called The Loess Plains. This region is also sometimes referred to as the Rainwater Basin or the Rainbasin.

One might think of sand dunes as belonging near an ocean of one of the Great Lakes. But, north of the Platte River in central Nebraska lies the largest area of sand dunes in North America. This area, about 20,000 square miles, is created of fine sand formed into hills by the wind. Most of the sand in the so-called Sand Hills, is held in place by grass. Exceptions occur due to overgrazing of cattle and this is cattle country supported by streams and abundant well water.

North and west of the Sand Hills are the High Plains, characterized by rising land up to over a mile above sea level in the west along the Wyoming border. This area receives little rainfall

although some farming is accomplished with irrigation techniques. Rougher sections of the High Plains are used for cattle grazing. The beautiful Wildcat and Pine Ridges are covered with evergreen trees. The highest point in Nebraska, at 5,426 feet above sea level is found in southwestern Kimball County.

In the northwestern corner of Nebraska is a small area of Badlands. In this area of Nebraska, wind and water have sculpted the sandstone and clay into strange and beautiful natural formations. This unusual landscape is characterized by steep hills laid bare by the wind to reveal sandstone and siltstone structures including pedestals shaped like mushrooms. Toadstool Park, in the Oglala National Grasslands, is an attraction of the Nebraska Badlands.

Climate (All temperatures Fahrenheit)

Highest Temperature: The highest temperature recorded in Nebraska is 118°, Fahrenheit. This record high was recorded July 15, 1934 at Geneva; on July 17, 1936 at Hartington; and on July 24, 1936 at Minden.

Lowest Temperature: The lowest temperature in Nebraska, -47°, was recorded on February 12, 1899 at Camp Clarke and on December 22, 1989 at Oshkosh.

Average Temperature: Monthly average temperatures range from a high of 89.5 degrees to a low of 8.9 degrees.

Arbor Day

Arbor Day is the holiday Nebraska gave to the world. The first celebration of Arbor Day took place April 10, 1872. J. Sterling Morton, the holiday's founder, and the State Board of Agriculture offered as a prize, "a farm library of twenty five dollars worth of books to the person who, on that day, shall plant properly, in Nebraska, the greatest number of trees." Nearly a million trees were planted that first Arbor Day. The winner of the prize was one J.D. Smith, who planted an unbelievable 35,500 trees in one day.

In 1875, Governor Robert Furnas declared April 8th Arbor Day. Ten years later the legislature designated April 22, J. Sterling Morton's birthday, as Arbor Day. The day became a legal holiday that year. Arbor Day is now observed in nearly all the states and U.S. Territories, and has spread to foreign countries as well. It is a unique holiday because, in the words of its founder, "Other holidays repose upon the past; Arbor Day proposes for the future."

Nebraska State Historical Society
HISTORY MINUTE #020

Fun Facts

During the Civil War, Nebraska had a population of only about 30,000. Of these, 3,307 served in the war.

In 1862, Daniel Freeman of Beatrice was the nation's first recipient of land granted under the unique Homestead Act.

President Andrew Johnson vetoed the Nebraska statehood bill of 1866, but Congress overrode his veto, and Nebraska became a state on March 1, 1867.

In 1934, Nebraska became unique among the states when it installed its unicameral (one-house) legislature, consisting only of a Senate.

The largest hailstone ever recovered in the United States was found in Aurora, Nebraska, on June 22, 2003. The record-setting stone was seven inches in diameter and nearly 19 inches around—nearly the size of a soccer ball.

According to the Nebraska state government, the most visited attraction in Nebraska in 2005 was the Cabela's outdoor store in Sidney. The town is the headquarters of the \$1.5 billion corporation.

Lincoln's 59-mile O Street is the longest Main Street in the nation.

Nebraska's Bailey Railroad Yard is the longest in the United States. It handles as many as 10,000 rail cars each day.

Nebraska became one of the first states to provide the entire state with educational television in 1963.

In 1927, Edwin E. Perkins of Hastings invented the powdered soft drink Kool-Aid.

The Lied Jungle located in Omaha is the world's largest indoor rain forest.

The 911 system of emergency communications, now used nationwide, was developed and first used in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Vice Grips, Hallmark Cards, Reuben sandwiches and Runzas all started in Nebraska.

NEBRASKA STATE SYMBOLS

STATE TREE : COTTONWOOD

STATE GRASS: LITTLE BLUESTEM

STATE ROCK: PRAIRIE AGATE

STATE GEM: BLUE CHALCEDONY

STATE FOSSIL: THE MAMMOTH

NICKNAME: CORNHUSKERS

STATE BIRD: THE MOURNDOCK

STATE INSECT: HONEY BEE

STATE FLOWER: THE GOLDENROD

STATE SONG: "BEAUTIFUL NEBRASKA"



COMMUNITY INFO

Things to do in Gering, Scottsbluff, and the Surrounding Area

** Information taken from brochures & publications. Also from www.visitnebraska.org Contact sites to double check hours.

Gering

North Platte Valley Museum – Enjoy a walk through time beginning with American Indian exhibits, fur trappers, trading posts and ending with the settlement of the North Platte Valley of the Nebraska Panhandle and unique artifacts of the 1900s - 1950s. An authentic sod house is located on the grounds, along with a log house and an Oregon Trail marker. Open 1 – 4 p.m. Saturday & Sunday, Memorial Day – Labor Day and 9a.m. – 4 p.m. year Monday – Friday year around. (308) 436-5411.

Farm & Ranch Museum – The only museum in Nebraska solely devoted to farming and ranching. Learn how the Great American Desert became America's Bread Basket. Open 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Monday – Saturday and 1-5 on Sunday, May through September. (308) 436-1989

Wildlife World or WyoBraska Museum of Natural History – Kids love it! See more than 600 animal specimens from the 7 continents, fossils, and dioramas in this renovated train station. Many one of a kind. Summer hours: Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm; Sat, 10am-4pm. (308) 436-7104

Scotts Bluff National Monument – Breathtaking views from the summit of this imposing emigrant trails landmark. The on-site Oregon Trail Museum houses a priceless William Henry Jackson Collection of paintings and other trail artifacts. Open 8 a.m. – 6 p.m. year around. (308) 436-4340

Wildcat Hills Nature Center – Hike around in the hills or just sit and watch the birds and the bees (bee hive located in the ground floor of the building – birds outside!) Open 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. Monday - Friday during the winter months and 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. seven days a week from Memorial Day – Labor Day. (308) 436-7104.

Robidoux Pass and Robidoux Trading Post - Jct NE Hwys 92 & 71, 1 mi. S. on NE Hwy 71, 8 mi. W. - Western traffic flowed through this pass 1843 to 1851. Left of the road is a monument for the blacksmith shop; to the right are pioneer graves. Reconstructed trading post in Carter Canyon, south of Gering; turn right at Cedar Canyon Road. Grounds open year-round. Groups by appt. Free. (308) 436-6886

Scottsbluff

Riverside Zoo – another great stop for the kids. Well presented, fun, and restful. Home to more than 200 animals representing more than 75 species.

Filled with not only the native prairie animals, but also the exotic ones from far off lands. Open 9:30 – 4:30 daily (308) 630-6236

Historic Midwest Theater – take in a movie at the renovated theater. Sit back in comfort – 1940s style! For information call (308) 632-4311

West Nebraska Arts Center – A historic building to the city, now used to showcase artistic talents. In August, local artist Chad, will be showing paintings and mixed media works. For information call (308) 632-2226.

Monument Pathways - Take a hike along the historic North Platte River on the Pathways. Great scenery on this two mile stretch of sidewalk on the Mormon Trail side of the North Platte River. Amazing views of the Scotts Bluff National Monument.

Gering & Scottsbluff have swimming pools, lovely parks, beautiful golf courses, a skating rink, a go cart/water boat activity park, several antique shops, and a wonderful quilt shop (in Gering – directly across the street from the Civic Center).

Scotts Bluff County

Lake Minatare State Recreation Area – Tour one of only five inland lighthouses. Built by the veteran's section of the CCC, the lighthouse is a wonderful example of the quality construction done by the CCC workers. Located eight miles north of Minatare, NE. More than 2,000 acres of water and beach for camping, hiking, boating, and fishing. Open Jan 15th – Oct. 1st. (308) 783-2911

SITES WEST

Mitchell

Located eight miles west of Scottsbluff, Mitchell is home to **Prairie Vine Winery** which grow and brew award winning wines “Taste the Prairie’s Finest”. (308) 623-2955

Nile Theater – Established 1939...watch current big screen movies in a blast from the past atmosphere without paying the typical prices for a good time. Wonderful balcony seating available. Small town single big screen theatre serving a community of 1200 + the surrounding areas. Located in downtown Mitchell. The Nile is open on weekends showing first run attractions. (308) 623-2727.

Scotts Bluff County Fair – Fair week and OCTA week are happening at the same time!!! If you want a flavor of small town farm life & fun, you may want to stop and take in the fair. (carnival, food fair, animals, music, dance, rodeo, and much more!)

Morrill

Horse Creek Treaty Markers are located just west of Morrill on hwy 26. The actual creek is about three miles away, but there is a nice turn out where you can stop and read the markers.

Morrill Museum is located in the basement of the City Library.

(308) 247-2312.

Henry – Still on hwy 26, take a detour to the south a couple miles to the Torrington, Wyoming

Homesteaders Museum is an interesting stop.

This is also one of the camping spots of the returning Robert Stuart party in 1812.

Lingle, WY

Five miles west of Lingle, (the turn towards Fort Laramie), you will find the Western History Center. Displays at this museum include several fossils and artifacts found near Lingle, along the emigrant, trade and cattle trails.

Fort Laramie & Guernsey – WOW! And you are only 70 miles from Gering/Scottsbluff.

SITES NORTH

Agate Fossil Beds – one of the best kept secrets of the National Park Service, this site, known for its collection of prehistoric fossils, is also home to an astonishing collection of artifacts given to James Cook by Chief Red Cloud and his family. For decades the Sioux Chief and Cook were friends and Cook was the beneficiary of many hand made gifts. Agate is located about 35 miles north of Mitchell.

Sioux Co. Historical Museum – Open May 31 – Sept. 15. Mon. – Sat. 1-4p.m. Sun. 1-5p.m.

Fort Robinson –aka- Camp Robinson- aka- Red Cloud Agency located near Crawford. Operated by Nebraska State Historical Society, Fort Robinson features several restored military buildings and a museum. Fort Robinson was established in the 1870s and was used as a POW camp and a K9 training center during WWII.

Chadron State Park – nice camping, hiking, and general restful place to stop. Scenic area. 8 1/2 mi. S. on US Hwy 385 - Nebraska's first state park nestled in the picturesque Pine Ridge with a modern campground, swimming pool, trail rides and more. Park open year-round. Cabins available mid-Apr thru mid-Nov and for big game firearm and wild turkey seasons. Day use and camping available year-round. Park permit required. Camping fee. (308) 432-6167

Museum of the Fur Trade – Newly remodeled, well displayed story of the Fur Trade and James Bordeaux. The grounds include the trading house and warehouse built on Bordeaux Creek in 1837. Located three miles east of Chadron. You are only 100 miles from Gering/Scottsbluff. If you continue north, you will end up at the Mammoth Site & Mt. Rushmore.

Dawes County Historical Museum – Genealogy and history research library, log house, barn, school, church and caboose. County record collection including marriage certificates, birth

certificates, obituaries and Chadron and Crawford newspapers. Open Memorial Day-Sep 30, Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm; Sun, 1-5pm; or by appt. History in Action Day 2nd Sun in Sep. Free, donations accepted. (308) 432-4999

Nebkota Dinner Train - Dining car excursions through the scenic Pine Ridge area. Three-hour dinner excursions on Fri & Sat evenings, April - October. \$35 per seat. Also available for private rental and special events. (308) 432-2487

Hudson Meng Bison Site - Open daily May 27th - Sept. 4. 9a.m.-5p.m.

SITES EAST

Chimney Rock - Nebraska State Historical Society site operating a visitor center at the base of the landmark mentioned most often in pioneer diaries. Several artifacts tell the emigrant story and to test your pioneer mettle, there is even a wagon to pack!

Bayard

Bayard Depot Museum - Located just north of the railroad tracks in Bayard, the museum displays a collection of local history: Pioneer machinery, tools, quilts, schoolroom, kitchen and bedroom. Located 20 miles east of Gering/Scottsbluff. Memorial Day weekend-Labor Day, Mon.-Sat. 9am-4pm; Sun. 1-4pm. Groups by appt. Free. (308) 586-1496

Oregon Trail Wagon Train - Experience the real West in the shadow of Chimney Rock aboard a prairie schooner on the Oregon Trail. Exciting journeys, complete with Pony Express riders and American Indians, are available on a 1- to 4-day basis. Chuck wagon features rib-eye steak cookout: \$18.95 adults, \$9.50 children under 12 yrs, \$1 children under 7 yrs. Canoe rental \$9/hour. Guided, prearranged group tours and wagon train treks. RV park and log cabins. Reservation only. (308) 586-1850

Bridgeport

Pioneer Trails Museum - New building with many new displays. Open Memorial Day - Labor Day. Monday - Saturday 10a.m.- 6p.m. Sunday 1p.m.-6p.m. (308) 262-0123

Court House & Jail Rocks - 5 mi. S. of Bridgeport, on NE Hwy 88 - These unusual rock formations were 2 of the first "road signs" met by westward travelers. Open year-round during daylight hours. No tourist facilities at the site nor staff presence. Free. 1-800-833-6747

Sidney

Fort Sidney - Three original buildings of the old fort. Museum in the office quarters is said to have a resident ghost! Check it out for yourself. Garrison was built to protect railroad workers in the late 1800s. Historical markers give the history of the old railroad town and the north-south trails to the gold fields in the Black Hills. May 1-Labor Day, Mon-Fri, 9-11am & 1-3pm; Sat-Sun, 1-4pm; or by appt. Free. (308) 254-2150

Cabella's - Outdoor equipment of every sort from fishing and hunting to backpacking at this huge 72,000-sq-ft store. See more than 500 trophy mounts. Mon-Sat, 8am-8pm; Sun, 10am-6pm. (308) 254-7889

Historic Downtown Sidney - 29 buildings in the shopping area listed on national register.

Alliance

Carhenge – Using old car bodies painted gray, this site is patterned after Stonehenge. The site contains other “scrap metal” art and even has a “covered wagon”. Located three miles north of Alliance. Alliance is located 60 miles north east of Gering/Scottsbluff.

Knight Museum – currently undergoing major construction.

Sallows Military Museum – Exhibits from the Civil War through the Iraq War. Open year round. Monday – Saturday 1p.m.-5p.m.

Dobby Town – recreated turn of the century town including a mortuary, saloon, strawbale building and more! Open 10a.m.-6p.m. Tues.-Sun.

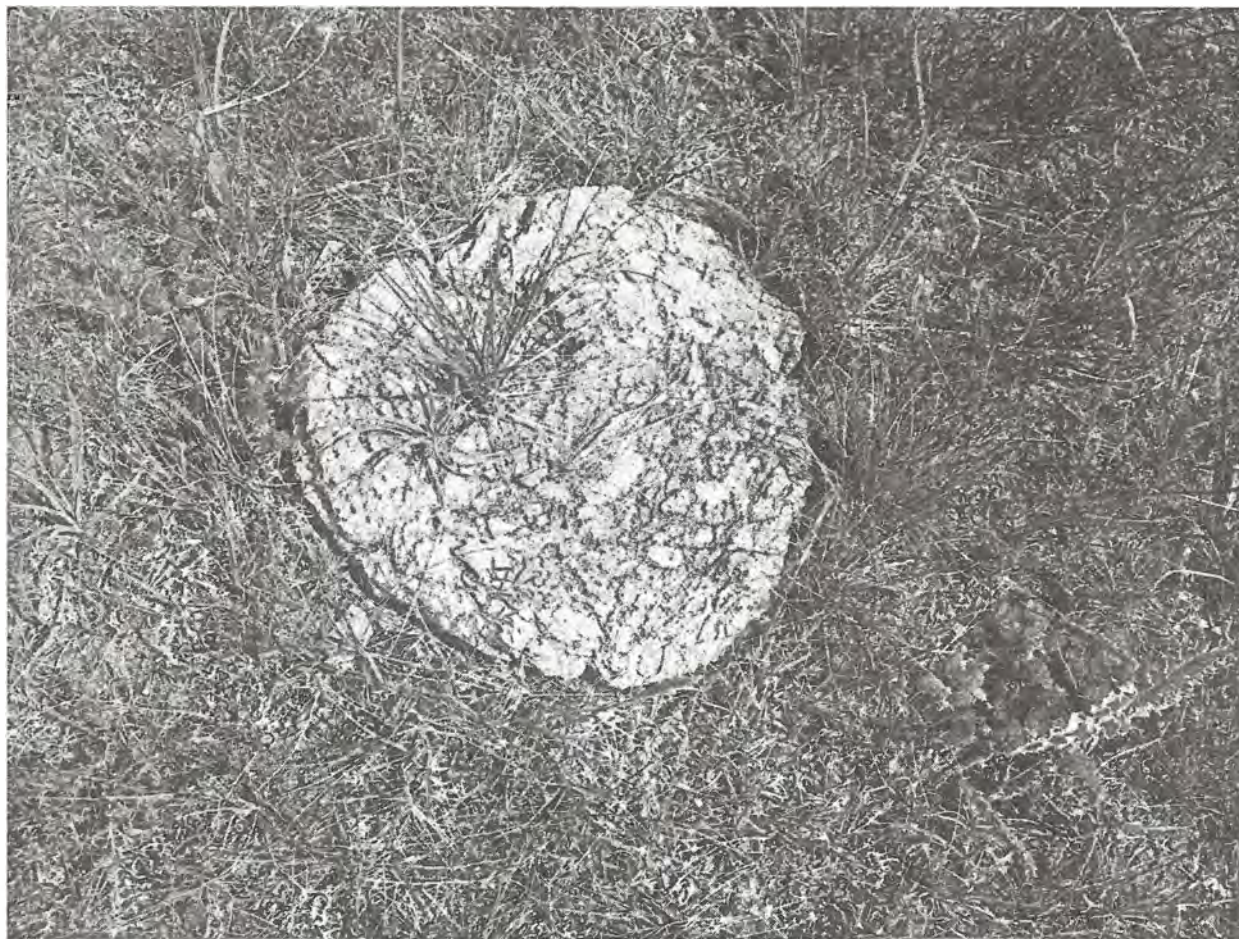
Cooking with Chips

Fuel was scarce on the Nebraska prairie in settlement days. What little wood there was along creeks and streams was quickly used up, so homesteaders had to resort to cow chips or buffalo chips. This fuel was plentiful, but it dismayed fastidious housekeepers, and it burned so quickly the whole family could be kept busy stoking the stove and hauling ashes.

Handling chips while cooking led to much hand-washing. Charlie O’Kieffe described the routine of baking biscuits on a chip-fired stove this way: “First, stoke the stove. Get out the flour sack; stoke the stove; wash the hands; mix the biscuit dough with the hands; stoke the stove; wash the hands; roll out the dough; stoke the stove; wash the hands; cut the biscuit dough with the top of a baking powder can; stoke the stove; wash the hands; put the biscuits in the oven; keep on the firing the stove until the biscuits are ready for the table, not forgetting to wash the hands before taking up the biscuits.”

This tedious routine was carried out as many as three times a day. It’s no wonder that when the railroads brought coal, pioneer housewives rejoiced. The soft coal was as messy as chips, but at least it burned longer!

NEBRASKA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
HISTORY MINUTE 192



THE END

CONVENTION SPEAKERS & TOPICS

Gregory Franzwa, Keynote - Challenges, August 1982 and August 2007

The history of OCTA including the impetus for founding OCTA--destruction of historic trails in prior months, and probable destruction in later months; the challenges facing OCTA in this and future years, and what to do about those challenges.

Camille Bradford - Nebraska: The prominence of its trails and leaders in the work of the Oregon Trail Memorial Assoc. and the American Pioneer Trails Assoc.

In addressing the first OCTA convention, Merrill Mattes paid tribute to the Oregon Trail Memorial Association (OTMA) as OCTA's "spiritual ancestor." The name of the association was changed in the early 1940s to the American Pioneer Trails Association (APTA).

On the occasion of its 25th annual convention, it is appropriate to examine OCTA's legacy from its spiritual ancestor. The legacy encompasses over 35 years of successful trail-marking and other historic projects from the 1920s until the 1960s.

Nebraska played a prominent role in the work of OTMA/APTA, whose activities in the state were led by an active chapter and other individuals strongly committed to preservation of trail history and sites. This presentation will focus upon Nebraska and the legacy that its leaders during the 1920s to 1960s created for future generations.

Janet Burton Seegmiller - American Pioneer Trails Movement

The name of Howard R. Driggs is familiar to many Western trails' enthusiasts because of his leadership for over three decades of the Oregon Trail Memorial Association and the American Pioneer Trails Association. He supported and encouraged the early efforts of Ezra Meeker and William Henry Jackson to arouse the interest of the American public in the epic covered wagon migrations and the trails that were endangered in the early decades of the 20th Century. He also wrote numerous books on the subject. After Dr. Driggs' death in 1963, the files of the OTMA and the APTA remained with his widow in Baytown, New York, and eventually were moved to Colorado. His step-daughter (an active OCTA member) created an inventory of the files.

In 2004, the collection was acquired by the Sherratt Library, Southern Utah University. All materials have been preserved and arranged by subject and the audio tapes and some films have been digitized. A searchable online finding aid is being created and by the summer of 2007, the remaining films and images will be digitized and the images will be cataloged into an online database to allow for improved access. This paper is designed to introduce the Howard R. Driggs Archive to members of OCTA and highlight both the fascinating items kept by Dr. Driggs and the vast research materials that are finally available to the public for research.

William Hill Trail Giants A number of historians through out the "history of the history" have kept alive and fanned the flame of interest in the subject of the Great Westward Migration. How many us became interested because they read a work by Paden, Mattes, or Kimball. Author and historian William Hill will talk about the lives of these and other historians on whose shoulders we now vied the story.

William Hill - Trail Giants

A number of historians through out the "history of the history" have kept alive and fanned the flame of interest in the subject of the Great Westward Migration. How many us became interested because they read a work by Paden, Mattes, or Kimball. Author and historian William Hill will talk about the lives of these and other historians on whose shoulders we now vied the story.

Robert Munkres - Sentinels of the North Platte

Sentinels of the North Platte – Dr. Robert Munkres, Estes Park, Colorado a noted historian and author, will describe the emigrant's descriptions of Court House Rock, Chimney Rock and Scotts Bluff as well as incidents which affected them on their journey west.

Amy Koch - Recent Investigations at the Fort Mitchell Site

In 1864 the U.S. Army established Fort Mitchell west of present day Scottsbluff, Nebraska. Fort Mitchell was one of several U.S. Army outposts whose mission was to protect the Overland Trail and telegraph line that linked the eastern United States with the west coast. Also located in the vicinity of the fort were a reported stage/mail station and a road ranch. Fort Mitchell was in existence for only a few years being abandoned in 1867. Although the general location of the Fort was known from historical records, the exact location of the structure has eluded researchers. A proposed railroad overpass along Nebraska Highway 92 has prompted renewed investigations to determine the exact location of the former fort buildings and archeological features. This paper will report on recent efforts to locate Fort Mitchell and determine if significant archeological remains are still present.

Ronnie O'Brien - Breaking the Mormon Trail Comfort Zone

Many Mormon Trail descendants have perceived the trail as a "romantic isolated saga". Ronnie O'Brien, Manager of the Great Platte River Road Archway Monument, has helped trail descendants and non-descendants alike look in depth at a micro-section of the Mormon Trail in Nebraska and the amazing interaction, compassion, misunderstanding and humor of life on the trail.

Loren Pospisil - *Coming along behind our wagon: Dogs on the Western Trails*

More than people moved west, a culture moved west and emigrants brought with them the trappings of their culture. For thousands of years, dogs have been part of human culture, so it was natural for many emigrants to want to take their dogs with them. Others found dogs already here as Plains Indians had long been using dogs for transportation in a pre-horse culture.

Many guide books suggested leaving dogs at home. Many people complied with this advice. Other emigrants, however "could not think of leaving our dog." The dust has blown over their paw prints, but their stories remain.

William Altizer - Volunteers along the Overland Trail: Using Archaeology and History to Explore the Military Experience along the Trail during the 1860s

With the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, the regular units assigned to guard the Overland Trails across the Great Plains were transferred to the East; in their place were assigned a number of volunteer units, such as the 11th Ohio Cavalry and 7th Iowa Cavalry. Between 1861 and 1865, as the great battles of the Civil War raged, these volunteer units served in relative obscurity in the West, protecting the Overland Stage and telegraph lines and participating in campaigns against hostile Indians. Did these far-flung garrisons receive the same attention from government authorities as the more prominent armies serving in the East? Or were they treated as an afterthought, issued substandard or obsolete equipment? In this paper I explore the history of the relatively little-known military posts on the Plains, and discuss the ways in which archaeological investigation can help us gain a fuller understanding of the trails experience during the 1860s.

James Hanson - The Fur Trade of the Fort Laramie Region

The Fort Laramie area was the intersection of trade routes reaching from Spanish Mexico to the waters of the Upper Missouri, and from the Mississippi River to the West Coast. This prime location served until after the Civil War as the commercial entrepot of the Western Plains, serving Indians, emigrants, and army Troops until the coming of the railroad.

Dean Knudsen - William Henry Jackson: Journey of Discovery We know William Henry Jackson for his wonderfully illustrative paintings of the great westward migration. What we don't know is that Jackson had a life-long interest in documenting the world around him. This started with his early doodles, sketches as a Civil War soldier, wanderings to California and his US Geological Survey journeys, photography around the world and his now famous paintings. National Park Service Historian Dean Knudsen will tell the story of William Henry Jackson's remarkable life and art.

Michael Tate - William Quesenbury: Artist and Chronicler of the California Trail

William Quesenbury, an accomplished newspaper editor, Mexican War veteran, explorer of the Southern Plains, and propagandist for the Whig Party, left his Arkansas home in 1850 for the California gold fields. Accompanying a larger group of would-be prospectors, he traveled the Cherokee Trail across Indian Territory and Kansas, continued northward up the front range of the Rockies, and westward to California via Salt Lake City. Gold wealth eluded him, but he became involved in a larger artistic enterprise headed by John Wesley Jones to provide a "Western Panorama" for eastern audiences. On their east-bound journey along the more conventional Central Route, Quesenbury continued to draw sketches of landscapes, including Devil's Gate, Independence Rock, Laramie Peak, Scotts Bluff, Chimney Rock, and Court House and Jail Rocks. These sketches were used in the construction of Jones's Panmtoscope, or moving picture show, which appeared in major urban entertainment centers during the following several years.

Quesenbury's art, diary and experiences with the unique Pantascope formed the basis for this visual presentation.

Kay Threlkeld - Better Than The Men: The Role of Women in the Westward Migrations

The Oregon, Mormon and California Trail history is largely a history of families. Unlike other histories, men, women, and children all had a role and a story to tell. The challenges of providing for a family on a 2000-mile long wagon trail was a daunting one indeed. The myth of women being the "weaker sex" does not hold up to the hard work and rough conditions that trail life had in store for those following the Great Platte River Road. Women rose to the challenge of the American West, causing 1852 emigrant Henry Taylor to remember: "[we supposed] they would be too tender and delicate for the trip, But how agreeably we were disappointed, for contrary to expectations they stood the trip better than the men." Historian Kay Threlkeld with the National Park Service will explore the life on women on the western trails.

Jerome Kills Small - Stories for Children of All Ages

Jerome Kills Small tells the stories of his elders, and the stories they left for future generations. He tells of the memories of childhood, and stories for intergenerational history. Lakota oral tradition shows respect for animals, plants, the universe, and especially for the people. He sings songs with his elk hide drum to bring sounds of the heartbeat of all living beings, and invites the audience in a friendship dance.

Workshops

Successful Conventions: Jim Budde

Jim will give a presentation of OCTA's convention goals and discuss critical factors that have contributed to the success of prior conventions. Questions and discussion are encouraged. Chapters hoping to sponsor a convention are encouraged to attend this workshop and take advantage of the useful tools in their planning.

Chapter Development: Ross Marshall

Ross will lead a discussion on how chapters can identify, motivate, and encourage members to become part of the chapter leadership team and how chapters can build membership. Every chapter should have someone attend. Come share a time of creative thinking that will help OCTA develop leadership in the future.

Genealogy: Floyd Smith

Floyd is the director of the Western Nebraska Family Research & History Center and will share information on the Center's projects and useful aids for locating ancestors.

Trails Across Western Nebraska: Joy Sanders

In the heartland of America, quilting transcends the boundaries of culture, history, family and art. Local Historian and quilter Joy Sanders will use an Art History Quilt of the Panhandle of Nebraska to show the history of this area prior to 1900.

Saving Your Family Treasures: Ford Conservation Center

The Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center, division of the Nebraska State Historical Society, is a regional conservation center for the care of cultural materials. Located in Omaha, Nebraska, the Ford Conservation Center houses state-of-the-art technical laboratories for the examination, evaluation, and specialized conservation treatment of ceramics, glass, metals, ethnographic materials, archeological materials, wooden artifacts, works of art on paper, photographs, documents, archival materials, books, and some paintings and textiles.

Ford Center Conservators will demonstrate how you can preserve and protect your family treasures and how to avoid damaging pitfalls.

Trail Preservation: Dave Welch

This workshop will be held for chapter preservation officers and other interested members to discuss trail preservation initiatives such as mapping, marking and monitoring the trails. The workshop will be led by national preservation officer Dave Welch assisted by mapping chair Jim McGill and California-Nevada preservation officer Leslie Fryman.

FORUM - Untold Stories Along the National Historic Trails: Charles Trimble & W. Otis Halfmoon

As emigrants crossed Nebraska, they found a people already calling the Platte River home. This forum will explore both the historic context and the modern need to include the American Indian story in the interpretation of our National Historic Trails.

Historian Charles E. Trimble served as executive director of the National Congress of American Indians.

Trimble has also been president of the Nebraska State Historical Society. He will provide a historical context to this subject.

W. Otis Halfmoon is a Management Specialist with the National Park Service and will speak to the modern-day context of tribal consultation issues with the interpretation and planning of the various trails

The Oregon/California N.H.T. is one of our nation's important historic trails, and the tribal story will enhance the protection & interpretation of these important sites. This forum will allow and encourage discussion on these important issues.

The Paul & Helen Henderson Collection: Marge & Dyke Waitman, Barb Netherland

Marge & Dyke Waitman are the daughter and son-in-law of Paul and Helen Henderson. The Waitmans have written two books, Rails, Trails & Tales, a biography of Paul and Helen, and Maps of Manifest Destiny, copies of several Henderson maps. Barb Netherland is the director of the North Platte Valley Museum, home of the collection. This workshop is an overview of materials contained in the collection and the ongoing work to make the information easily accessible and more useable. This workshop will be held at the North Platte Valley Museum, 11th & J Streets - two blocks south of the Civic Center.

CONVENTION BUS TOURS

Ash Hollow Bus Tour

Mormon Campground Marker at Bridgeport
Ancient Bluffs Ruins
Ash Hollow Visitor Center
Talk on Blue Water Battle by Local Historian Jean Jensen
Hike Windlass Hill
Lunch at Ash Hollow Springs
Rachel Pattison grave
A Kelly Grave
John Holman Grave
Cobble Hills

Good view of Trail landmarks on way home, Courthouse and Jail Rocks, Jackson Panorama, Chimney Rock, Scotts Bluff. For much of its route, highways 26 and 92 are within a half mile of the trail or often right on it.

Bus Guides

Mert Davis
Arkie Snocker
George Post
Emarie Post
Bill Petersen

MORR-BLUFFS Bus Tour

Robidoux Trading Post, 2
Robidoux Pass
Robidoux Trading Post 1
Scotts Bluff National Monument
Take busses to top of Scotts Bluff
Fort Mitchell
Rebecca Winters
Lunch and visit Chimney Rock Visitor Center
Amanda Lamme
Mud Springs
Court House and Jail Rocks
Sidney Deadwood Trail marker
Jackson Panorama

Bus Guides

Nancy Haney
Jack Preston
Kevin Sandberg
Loren Pospisil

FORT LARAMIE BUS TOUR

Fort Mitchell
Horse Creek
Guernsey rest stop with historic sites viewing.
Guernsey Deep Ruts
Register Cliff
Old Bedlam Ruts
Lunch and visit Fort Laramie
Fort Bernard
Grattan Fight Marker

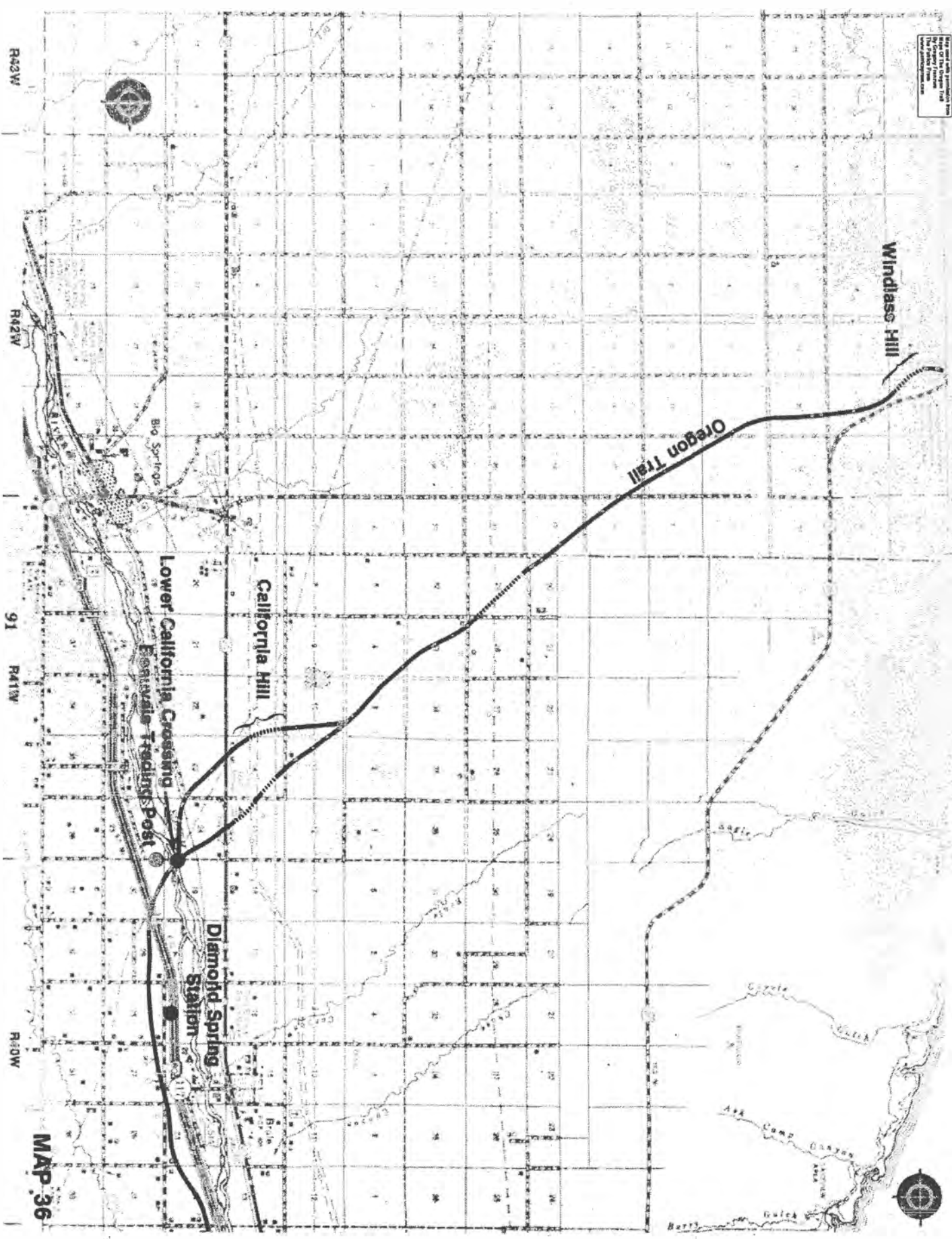
Bus Guides

Troy Molko
Judie Moorehouse
Kent Harvey
Don Hodgson

Some of these will be full stops, some due to logistics and timing, will be drive-bys.

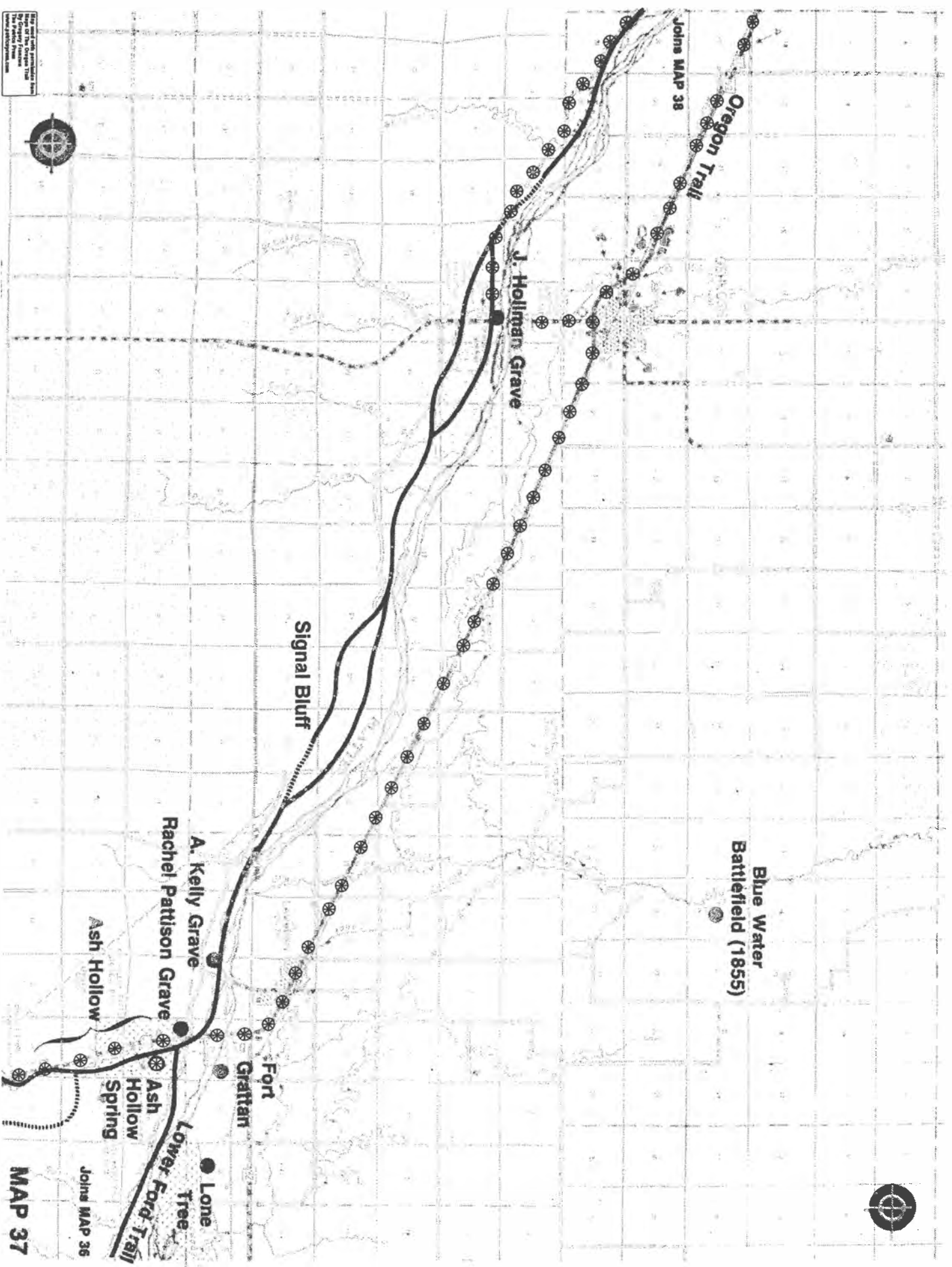
Scotts Bluff/Gering attractions bus guides
Lillis Grassmick & Suzanne Myers

Base of the Oregon Trail
The Oregon Trail
The Oregon Trail
The Oregon Trail



MAP 36

Map not to scale. Distances shown
are approximate. For more information
see the accompanying text.



MAP 37

Join's MAP 36



Map of the Oregon Trail
The Oregon Trail
The Oregon Trail
The Oregon Trail

Join MAP 39

Ancient Bluff Ruins

U.S. Mail Station No. 22

Narcissa Whitman Marker

Oregon Trail

PLATTE

MAP 38

Join MAP 37



To Museum of the Fur Trade,
Chadron (96 Miles)

Oregon Trail

Paul C.
Henderson
Monument

Courthouse
& Jail
Rocks

Courthouse Rock

Pony Express
Station

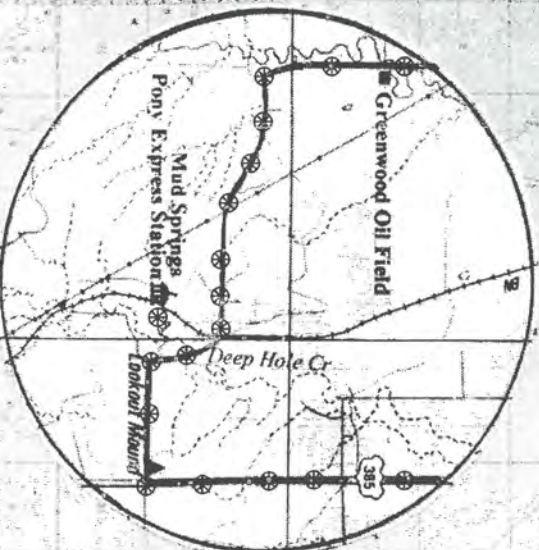
Pony Express Route

Sidney-Deadwood Trail (1875)

Mott-Bluffs Tour

Amanda Lemlin
Grave

Ash Hollow Tour



Ash Hollow Tour

Mqtr-Blyths Tour

Flickin's Springs Pony Express Station

Castle Rock

Or

Chimney Hook Station

Chimney Rock

Facus Springs

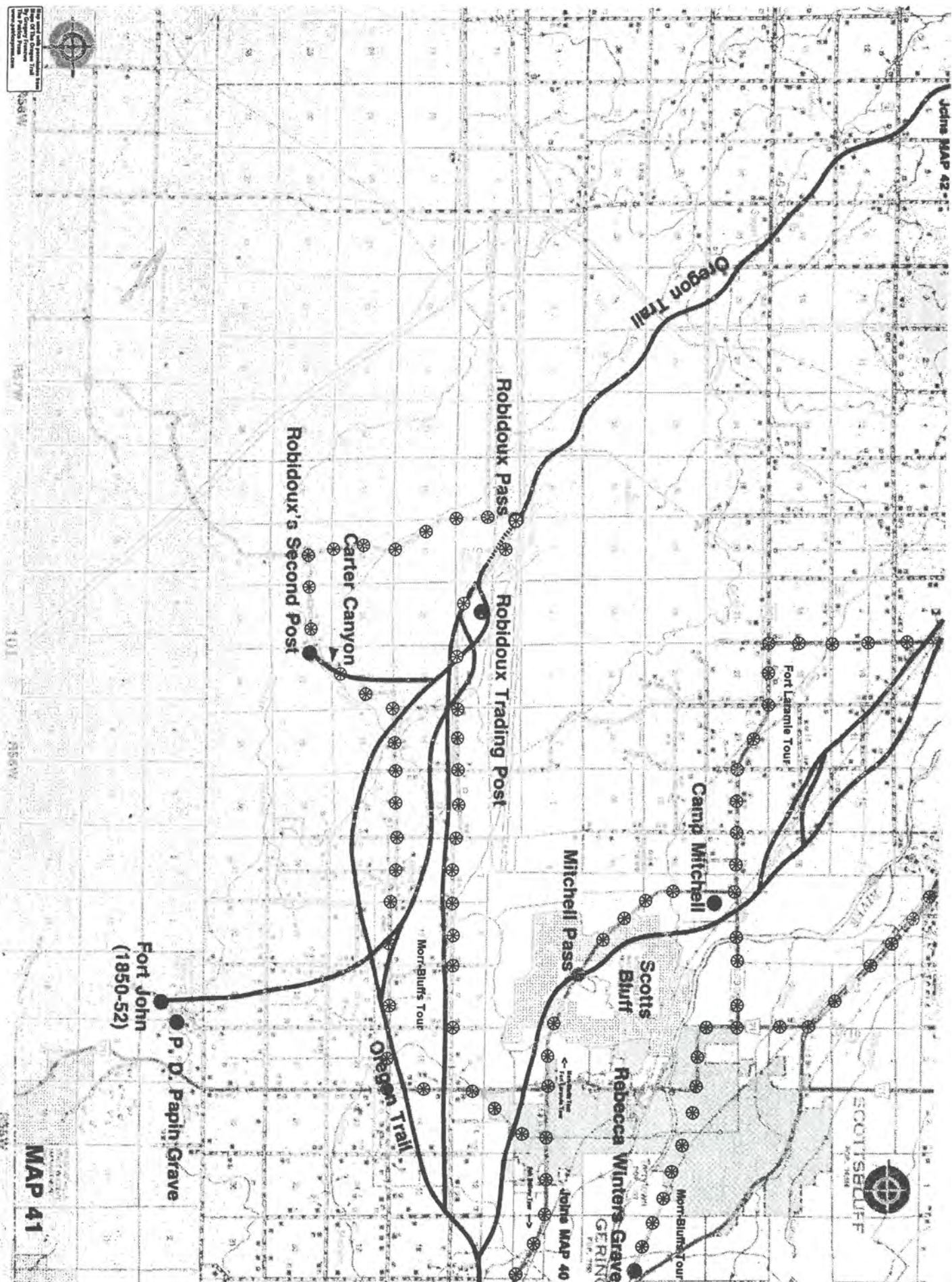
Jackson

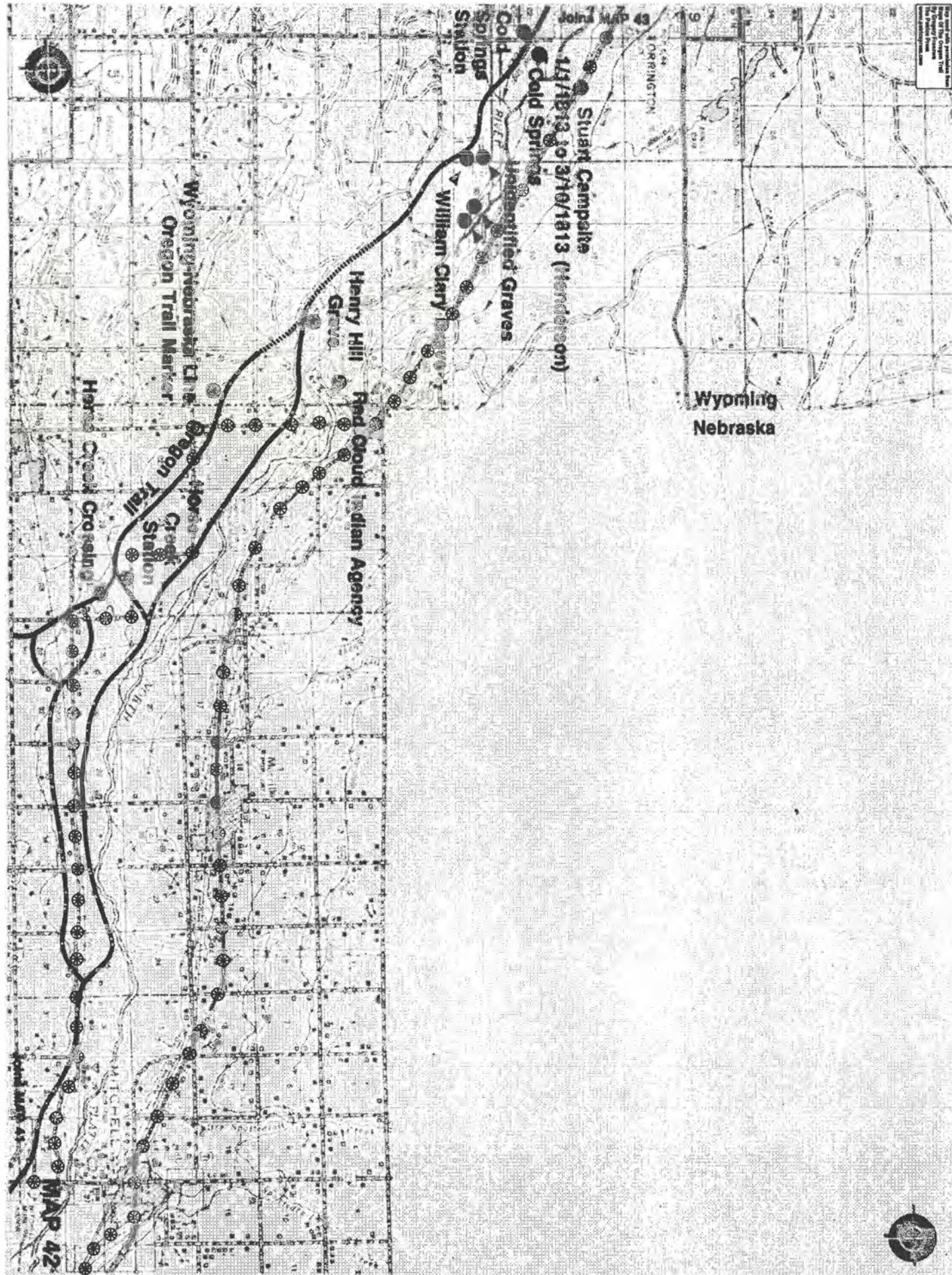
Johns MAP 39

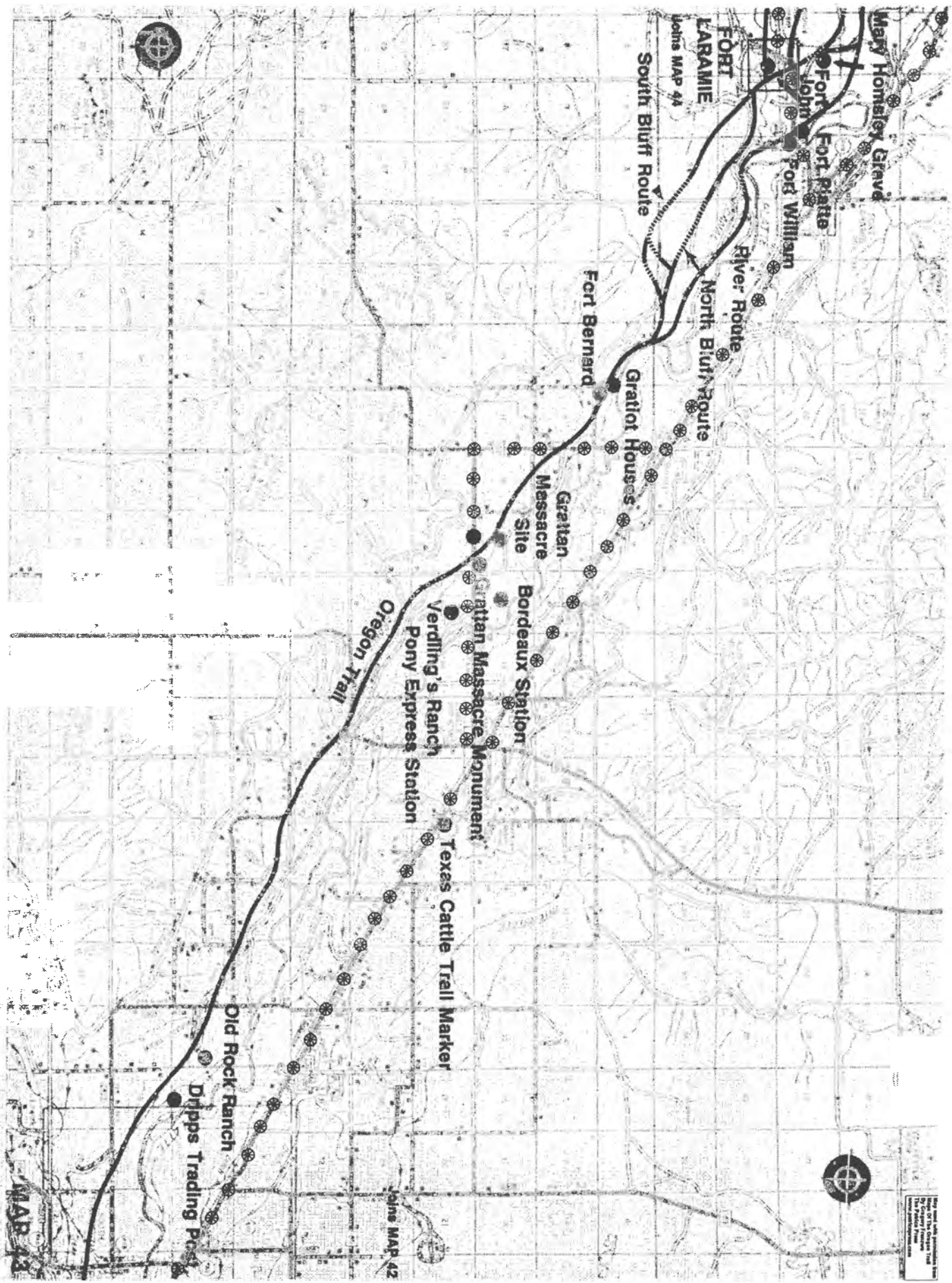
MAP 40



Only used with your own skin from
the Originals Of The Originals
by Gregory Peck
The Peck Press







For more information on the Oregon Trail, visit the National Park Service website at www.nps.gov/ortrail.

MAP 43

Cottonwood
Pony Express Station

Grave of
Wm. Page & K. Wood
(1859)

Porter's Pack

Cold Springs

Rifle Pits

Warm Springs

Pro Puts

Register

114

Mexican Hill

Platoon Route

North Bluff Road

South Bluff Road

MAR 44

Johns MAP 43

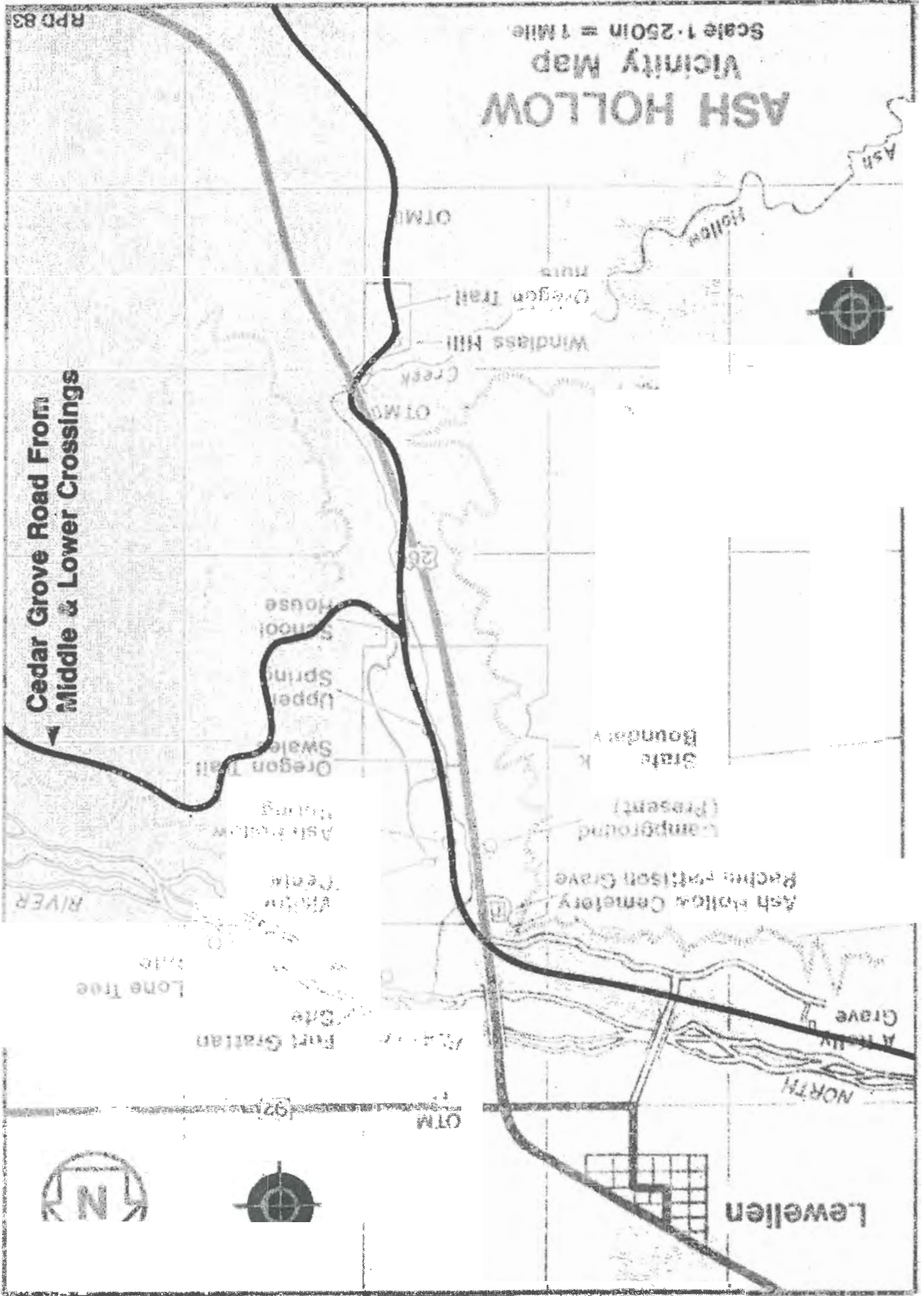
Only used with permission from
State Of The Oregon Trail
By Oregonians
The Pacific Press
www.pacificpress.com

ASH HOLLOW Vicinity Map

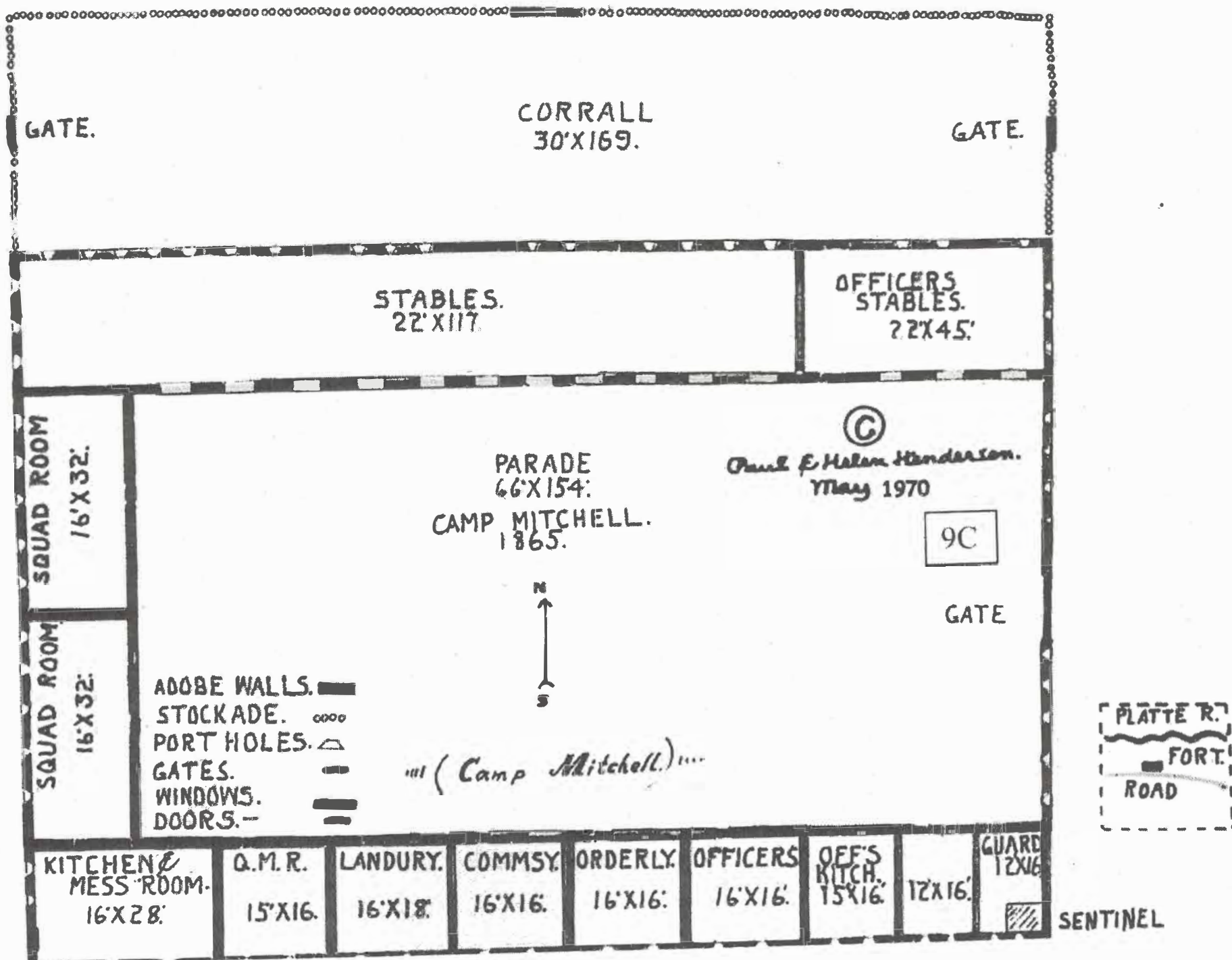
Scale 1:250in = 1 Mile



Cedar Grove Road From
Middle & Lower Crossings



RPD 83



11A

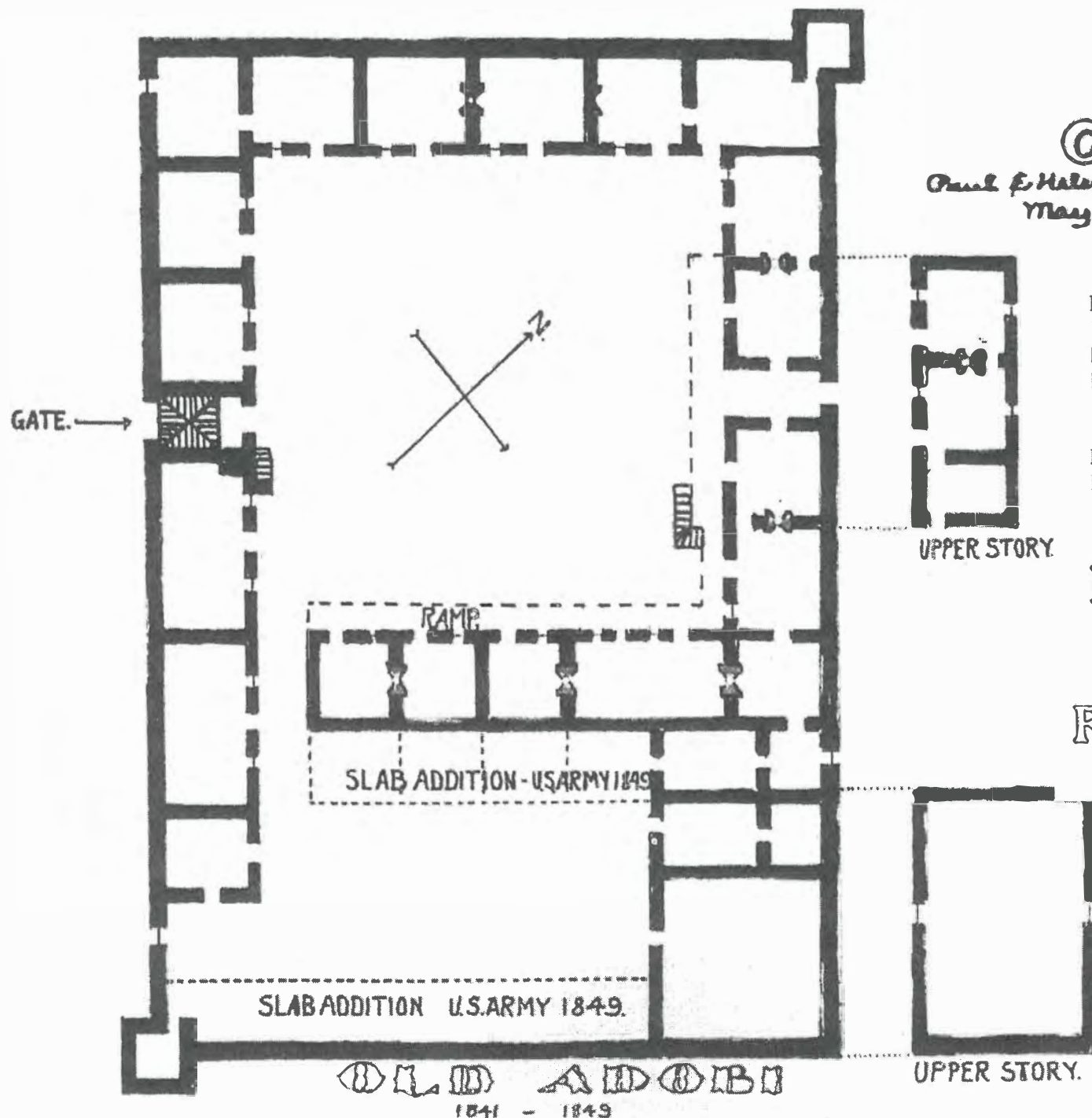
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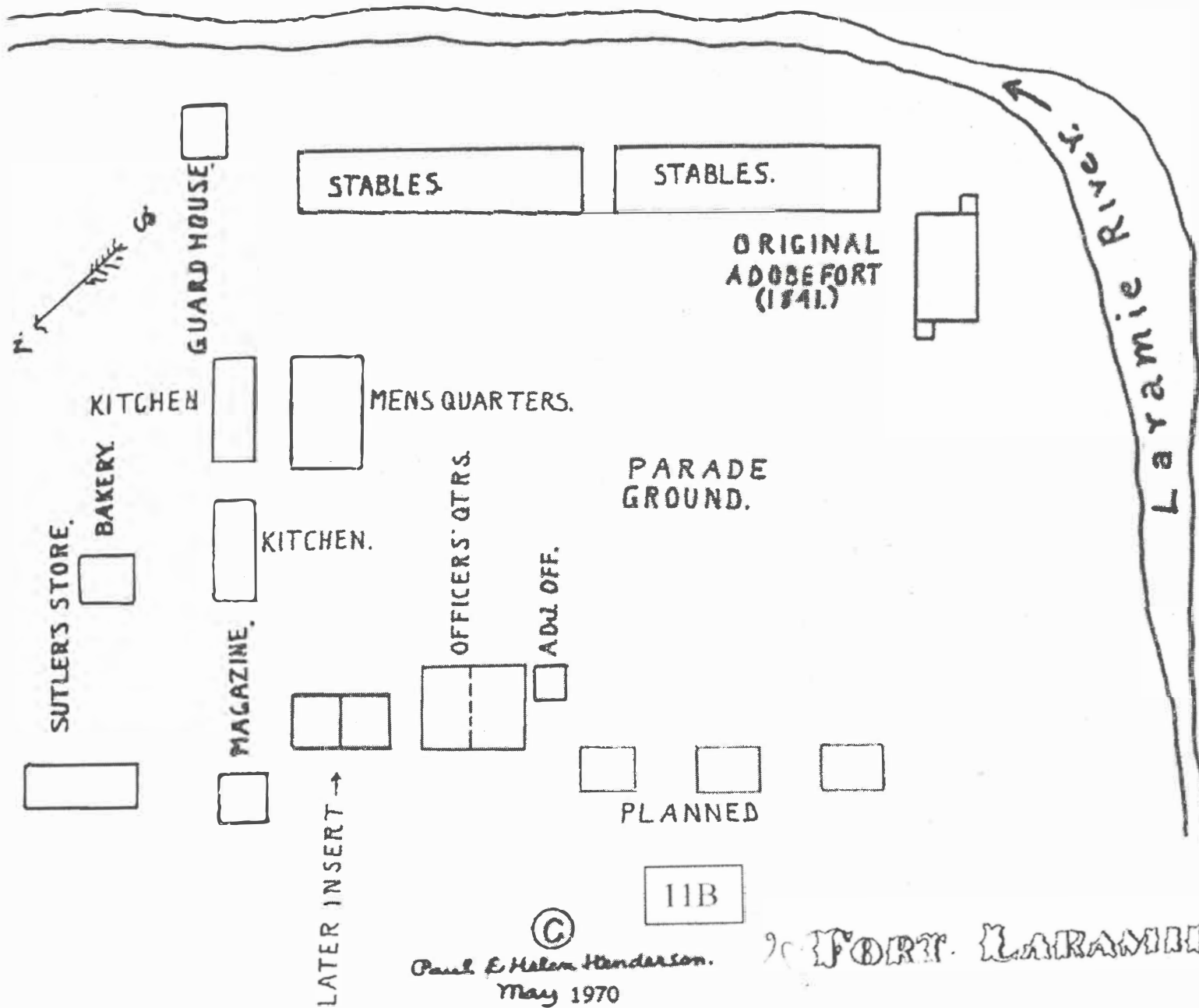
Paul & Helen Henderson.
May 1970

ENLARGED BY PAUL HENDERSON
1937 FROM A SCALED DRAWING BY
LIEUT. A. L. DOWLSON ENGINEER
IN 1851

REPRODUCED FEB. 1973 FOR
HISTORICAL MAP FOLI●

FORT JOHN LATER FORT LARAMIE





FORTS-FORT LAR
AMIE AREA.

1834 FORT WILLIAM

1841 FORT JOHN

1849 U.S. GOVERNME-
NT PURCHASED
FORT JOHN.

1849-1890 USA

□ 1849 ERECTION.
□ 1850 ERECTION.

COPY MADE FROM
NAT'L. ARCHIVES REC-
ORDS.

Paul & Helen Henderson
June 1970.

FORT LARAMIE