

Chapter 28 (Continued)

Leaving Camp Shuman, we passed through the gap at Scott's Bluffs, halting at Ficklin, where a detachment of the Eleventh Ohio was stationed, and reported by telegraph our whereabouts to Major Woods in command at Fort Laramie.

We saw wild sheep sporting on Scott's Bluffs. We saw a lot of deer on Alcohol Butte, which was separate from the Bluffs at no great distance. . . ." (Just what eminence were referred to as Alcohol Butte can only be conjectural.)

Chapter 29 Fort Mitchell and Indian Warfare

Mark Twain in "roughing it" gives us a graphic picture of life at old Fort Mitchell, but a more detailed descriptive account is to be found in John Bratt's memoirs, which is here quoted at some length, albeit in patches:

"We passed Brown's Road Ranch west of Scott's Bluff. This was kept by "Stuttering Brown" to whom I will refer . . . we finally wended our way through a crooked narrow pass, through Scott's Bluff. . . . Two miles west of these bluffs, standing on the south bank of the North Platte river was Fort Mitchell, a two-company adobe post. Directly south of this, across the overland trail, stood the Mitchell Road Ranch and stage station kept at this time by John Sibson. . . . Twelve miles west of this we passed Horse Creek ranch kept by Charles Blunt. . . .

"The second day after our arrival the stage coach from the east and a 12-wagon mule team came through the bluffs and opened the trail so our horse and mule trains, with all extra bullwhackers we could spare, pulled out for Nebraska City. The wagons were formed in a circle near the corral, stripped of bows and sheets, and the ox yokes and chains all stored under cover at the Sibson road ranch, with the exception of . . . the wagon boss, who went out to Robideaux Springs with the cattle where we intended to winter them.

"The road ranch was large, built of cedar logs, and had seven fair-sized rooms besides the store. It had dirt floors and roof. It had a large corral built out of cedar logs set closely together some three or four feet in the ground, with port holes on all sides . . . there were several Indian tepees pitched outside but near the corrals. A large one was occupied by John Hunter, a white man who had married General Garner's squaw wife, by whom Mr. Hunter had several half-breed children. The other tepees were occupied by relatives and friends of Mr. Hunter's Indian family. . . .

"The fort across the road was garrisoned by two companies of the Eighteenth infantry under Captain Hughes. One company had been mounted. His garrison was kept busy protecting the stage coaches, road ranches between Fort Laramie and Pole Creek, and freight and

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emigrant trains, and keeping up the overland telegraph line built by Edward Creighton and others." (1861).

There were several minor skirmishes between whites and Indians during the troublesome sixties which took place within the very shadow of Scotts Bluff, and at least two sizeable battles are recorded. Skeletons in association with bullets and arrowheads tell stories of stealth and murder, and burned wagon train sites testify to isolated raids. Grant Shumway in his "History of Western Nebraska" tells a hair-raising tale of an ambush at Mitchell Pass, and the ensuing battle between Indians and the Harney convoy which he calls the "Battle of Scotts Bluff Mountain Pass." Details follow:

"This convoy was in August, 1866, in charge of freight outfits for Fort Laramie and beyond as far as Salt Lake City. . . . They were camped at the spring some distance east of the mountain, and in the morning the wagons started out a short distance ahead of the soldiers . . . these wagons were moving through the gap when attacked. The sound of battle reached the soldiers, who were just mounting, and they started forward at a gallop. . . . Instead of heading straight for the gap they rode toward the point of rocks known as Eagle Crag, just north of the present pathway that leads up to the mountain from the east. At its base the cavalry parted and one half swung around to the south, skirting Engine Rock, and the others essayed to negotiate the Bad Lands north of the mountain . . . those coming upon the rear of the wagon train engaged the Indians who just appeared over the summit of the gap, while the others, after riding as far as they could on their horses, proceeded on foot. This gave them a good advantage, for the Indians were lying on the west slopes of the rocks that guard the gap, and hidden in ravines, busily engaged with enemy to the east of them, and did not notice the approach of the soldiers.

"Their first intimation of the existence of this force was when the soldiers opened a deadly fire upon them in their exposed positions. They fled toward the southwest, while out of one of the gulches on the prairie in that direction came an Indian having

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a number of horses. These the others mounted and rode away toward Roubideaux. . . .
Owing to having left their horses in the Bad Lands, pursuit of the Indians was impossible,
but the soldiers ran down across the pass and climbed the hill that guards it on the
south, and sniped off several of the Indians while they were still mounting and within
range.

"The 30 that were dead were buried a few rods west of the west end of the gap. . . ."

Chapter 30 Horse Creek Battle and the Two Pass Routes

In addition to being the site of the famous peace council of 1851 between the whites and the Indians, the site of a stage and pony express station, and the junction of important trails, the mouth of Horse creek is historically significant because of a bloody battle which occurred in that vicinity in June of 1865. (Horse creek is approximately 12 miles west of Scotts Bluff.) At that time it was deemed advisable by the command at Fort Laramie to remove the friendly Indians from the central scene of hostilities. From Grant Shumway's "History of Western Nebraska" we get the following account:

It seems a company of 135 soldiers under Captain Fouts was directed to act as an escort for about 1500 Indians, including squaws and papooses, who agreed to be removed to Fort Kearney. They proceeded down the south side of the river. There was nothing of suspicious note, except signal fires on the hills. On the afternoon of the thirteenth of June the party went into camp on Horse creek and the Indians proceeded to give a dog feast. In the evening 382 of the warriors congregated in secret council. The officers were seriously anxious to know just what was going on, yet their best efforts failed of finding out. On the morning of the fourteenth the advance guard started at five o'clock, the idea being to cover the 18 miles to the meadows near Fort Mitchell. The retinue was just getting under way when shots rang out in the rear, and the Indians made a concerted dash for the north bank of the river. In the melees there were numerous casualties, but the bulk of the Indians effected a complete escape, leaving the soldiers baffled.

* * *

Although, as we have seen, Mitchell Pass became an important focus of transcontinental travel in the fifties and sixties, it must always have presented something of a hurdle because of its precarious passage. Jackson describes his experience in 1866:

"In the p.m. we drove up into the pass that leads through Scotts' Bluffs. We had one of the steepest and worst gulches to drive through that we have yet had. Got

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through safely. Had a trying time getting supper. No spring in the pass and had to send three miles to the river for water. Our camp is in one of the narrow parts of the pass and the walls rise up perpendicularly on either hand."

The new routing of the Trail through Mitchell Pass did not mean that travel across Roubideaux Pass was altogether abandoned. It is even likely that travel was about equally divided for a number of years and we can imagine emigrants quarreling about directions when they came to the fork just south of present Gering. References to Roubideaux and his hostelry are found after 1852. Dr. Thomas Flint in 1853 writes:

"Came to a trading post and blacksmith shop run by a French Canadian living with a Sioux wife or wives. The place is a little way below Scott's Bluff. His prices, \$6 for shoeing an ox, \$1 per pair (one foot) for shoes and 4 cents apiece for nails."

As late as 1860 we find the famous English traveler Burton mentioning Roubideaux: "We passed a ranch called Roubidoux Fort from the well-known Indian trader of that name; it is now occupied by a Canadian or French Creole . . . with a Sioux squaw." In 1875 Major North and his famous Pawnee scouts encamped at Roubideaux Pass, or so it would seem from an account of the expedition, so that it is not unlikely that the Roubideaux Pass route was never abandoned entirely by soldiers and emigrants.

No more eloquent testimony to the historic eminence of Roubideaux Pass can be found than that furnished by the row of lonely unknown pioneer graves near the spring, and the intermittent deep parallel wagon-ruts which spread beyond the Pass towards Wyoming. Because it was the later route, the Mitchell Pass route has lived more vividly in the minds of men, and given rise to an ill-founded belief in some quarters that it was the original and only pass of consequence in the region. These notes have been written to furnish the reader with a proper perspective of the historic geography of the Scotts Bluff region. There is no intention of minimizing the importance of Mitchell Pass; but more attention has been devoted to Roubideaux Pass because of current misconceptions with regard to it, based on insufficient knowledge of local topography. After all,

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Scotts Bluff National Monument, while it is confined in area to Mitchell Pass and Scotts Bluff proper, is in a very real sense a symbol of and a memorial to the entire Oregon Trail, rather than to one small segment of it.

Chapter 31 Pioneer Mail Service

Scotts Bluff, sentinel at the gateway of the far west, witnessed many rapid changes in methods of transcontinental communications. No chapter in this saga is more thrilling than that of the pioneer mail, with its triumphs over heart-breaking obstacles. It bridged a gap between the "forty-niners" and the "iron horse." The location of the mail route was a source of much controversy, because the "overland mail" was regarded as the forerunner of the railroad, and the advance guard of settlement. However, ultimate victory, expedited by the Civil war, was for the "northern route" of which Scotts Bluff was an outpost.

The ocean steamer was the first regular agency of communication between the east and newly acquired California and Oregon. The Pacific Mail Steamship company operated from 1848 until 1858, arriving semi-monthly at San Francisco amid much celebration, and to considerable profit for the promoters.

Pressure for an overland mail increased. Military authorities established a regular service between their posts, but only for their own benefit. April 17, 1848, they dispatched Kit Carson with the first mail carried overland from the Pacific to the Atlantic. Most of the early overland enterprises were promoted by private companies. In the winter of 1849 the federal government established a post office at Salt Lake City, and authorized a bi-monthly mail between there and Council Bluffs.

In 1850 a contract was made with Samuel Woodson of Independence, Mo., for the transportation of the mail from the Missouri river to Salt Lake City, monthly each way. The service continued four years. This pioneer mail followed the Oregon trail up the Platte, past Scotts Bluff, and through South pass. Due to innumerable difficulties, the trip was seldom made in schedule time, and was practically suspended during winter months. In 1854 W. M. F. Magraw became the new contractor between Independence and Salt Lake City. The mail was to be carried in four-horse coaches in 30 days. A new contract was entered in 1856 with Hiram Kimball, who was backed by the Mormon leaders; but this enterprise came to an abrupt close with the advent of the "Mormon war" of 1857-8.

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The first United States mail between California and Salt Lake City was established in 1851. Contract was made with Absalom Woodward and George Chorpenning for a monthly service, the trip to be made in 30 days. Serious obstacles were encountered in the form of heavy snow and hostile Indians; but Chorpenning succeeded in establishing this route and contract was let to him in 1854 for service between Salt Lake City and San Diego. The service was usually performed on horseback.

In September, 1857, a six year contract was entered into with John Butterfield for carrying mails over a southern route from St. Louis to San Francisco through El Paso and Yuma. Northerners condemned this "ox-bow" route as a slave-holder's coup to secure a continental railroad for the south. However, the Butterfield Overland Mail was a popular and successful institution until the outbreak of the Civil war.

Between 1857 and 1859 there were extensive increases in mail lines to the Pacific. Upon the line from Independence to Salt Lake City (past Scotts Bluff) a contract was made with John M. Hockaday for a weekly service in four-mule carriages on a 20-day schedule; and George Chorpenning's contract from Salt Lake City to California was along the Central (Oregon trail) route from Independence, Mo., to Placerville, Calif., was in operation on a 38 day schedule.

Other routes established during this period were from Kansas City, Mo., to Stockton, Calif., via Santa Fe monthly; San Antonio to San Diego semi-monthly; New Orleans to San Francisco, via Tehuantepec, semi-monthly. Postmaster General Brown of Tennessee was chiefly responsible for this program.

While the through mail lines to California were being improved and the routes tested, and while congress was debating questions of postal policy, a new need for extension developed with the discovery of gold in Colorado. This was served originally by the Leavenworth and Pikes Peak Express, sponsored by the great freighting firm of Russell, Majors and Waddell. It operated along the South Platte, passing about 75 miles immediately south of Scotts Bluff.

In 1860 there was formed the Central Overland and Pikes Peak Express company, which

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assumed control of the entire mail service over the Central route, the main line of which went past Scotts Bluff. Unlike the Butterfield route, with its fat subsidy from the government, this colossal enterprise was wholly sustained by private capital. Its chief projector and president was William H. Russell, "Napoleon of the West," dreamer and doer, founder of the Pony Express.

Chapter 32 The Pony Express

"Here he comes! Every neck is stretched further, and every eye strained wider. Away across the endless dead level of the prairie a black speck appears against the sky. . . . In a second or two it becomes a horse and rider, rising and falling, rising and falling—sweeping toward us, nearer and nearer—growing more and more distinct, more and more sharply defined—nearer and still nearer, and the flutter of hoofs come faintly to the ear—another instant, a whoop and a hurrah from our upper deck, a wave of a rider's hand, but no reply, a man and a horse burst past our excited faces, and go winging away like a belated fragment of a storm!"

Such is Mark Twain's unique description of the passing Pony Express.

The story of Scotts Bluff would be incomplete without a reference to that unique institution called the Pony Express, or the Lightning Mail. The scheme was devised, it seems, for the purpose of demonstrating the practicability of the Central route or Salt Lake route for year-round travel, as against the southern or Butterfield route; it was not intended to be, and it certainly was not, a money-maker. The enterprise was promoted and managed by William H. Russell, of the firm of Russell, Majors and Waddell, who controlled the Overland Mail from the Missouri river to Placerville. On the 3rd of April, 1860, there was a simultaneous start from the two ends of the line—St. Joseph and San Francisco. The arrangements were so well planned and executed that the express was carried through in excellent time, as per schedule (75 ponies, Missouri to California in 10½ days).

The route taken by the Pony Express was that approximately of the Oregon-California trail—St. Joseph, Marysville, Rock Creek, Fort Kearney, Cottonwood Springs, Julesburg; across the South Platte up Lodgepole creek, across Thirty-Mile ridge to Mud Springs; thence to Courthouse Rock, past Chimney Rock and Scotts Bluff, and on to Fort Laramie; South pass, Fort Bridger and Salt Lake City; Camp Floyd, Ruby Valley, Fort Churchill and Carson City; Genoa, Lake Tahoe, Placerville, Sacramento; thence by boat to San Francisco.

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The stations in the Scotts Bluff region were at McArdle's ranch at Mud Spring (south of Bridgeport); Chianey Rock station, 25 miles east of the bluff; Scotts Bluff station, five miles east of the bluff, and Lower Horse Creek station. The Scotts Bluff station was 20 feet by 50 feet and had sod walls 30 inches thick. It ultimately became the Mark Coad ranch house in 1871; and, being adjacent to the river bank, appears to have been washed away in recent years by flood waters. Very few records have been preserved of the brief Pony Express history in the Scotts Bluff area. It is known that Jim Moore first started to ride the Pony Express out of Mud Springs, and this station eventually became his ranch. It is also on record that Charles Cliff had a miraculous escape after a fight with some Indians at Scotts Bluff.

Stations of log, stone or adobe were established at average intervals of 15 miles. Except in hostile Indian country two men were maintained at each post. The horses were the finest available, mostly half-breed California mustangs, famous for fleetness and endurance. The riders were keen young men, selected for nerve, light weight and dependability. They were armed light, and generally depended upon the speed of their mounts for safety from Indian attacks. Each man rode from 57 to 100 miles round trip twice a week, pay \$50 to \$150 according to the risks involved.

The mail was carried in four small leather bags called "cantinas" sewed to a square "mochila." The same "mochila" was transferred from rider to rider until it reached the opposite end of the line. The maximum weight for any mail was 20 pounds. Charges were reduced from \$5 to \$1 per ounce. The only serious interruption in the semi-weekly schedule was the Washoe Indian war in Nevada in 1860. By the aid of the advancing telegraph at each end of the line good time was made in the transmission of messages. The best time was made in carrying the news of Lincoln's election from Fort Kearney to Fort Churchill in six days.

When the Pacific Telegraph line was completed Oct. 24, 1861, the Pony Express came to a close. Although the Express was a private enterprise and was a financial failure

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it was very successful in demonstrating the practicability of the Central route, marking the path of the first transcontinental railroad, and helping to unite the Pacific coast and the Rocky Mountain region to the union during the ominous first year of the Civil war. (See L. Hafen: The Overland Mail).

Chapter 33 Indian Hostilities of 1862-1865

The post office appropriation bill of March 2, 1861, provided for the transportation of letter mail six times a week over the Central route from the Missouri river to Placerville, and tri-weekly to Denver and Salt Lake City. Contract was awarded to the Butterfield interests for one million dollars. This mail line, which supplanted that of the Central Overland California Pike's Peak Express company, followed the Oregon trail route up the North Platte past Scotts Bluff until July, 1862, when it was transferred to the Cherokee or Overland trail.

The Indians disturbances upon the northern course was the excuse for transference. The new route followed up the South Platte to the mouth of the Cache la Poudre, through Virginia Dale, across the Laramie plains, rounding Elk mountain and descending to the North Platte near the mouth of Sage creek. Crossing the North Platte the road led westward through Bridger pass, along the Red desert, down Bitter creek to the Green, and then up Black's fork to Fort Bridger, where the old line was intersected. This overland stage route approximates the Union Pacific railroad and the Lincoln highway of today through southern Wyoming.

Indian hostilities turned the route of the overland stage southward from Scotts Bluff; and probably influenced the location of the first transcontinental railroad, which might otherwise have used the North Platte valley past Scotts Bluff. Isolated depredations on established routes of travel were reported during the fifties, but it was not until the sixties, when the Indians read the true significance of the long covered wagon trails and bleaching buffalo bones, that the uprisings became general. Early in 1862 the red marauders were busy burning stations between Fort Bridger and the North Platte, destroying mail and coaches and killing attendants. Regulars and volunteer soldiers were dispatched to quell the redskins. They were hampered by the Indian's cunning method of guerilla warfare, and by a shortage of well-equipped troops, due to the Civil war.

With the shift from the South pass (North Platte) route to the Bridger pass (South

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Platte) route, Fort Laramie was left to the north of the mail line; so Fort Halleck was established at the north base of Elk mountain, where the Cherokee trail rounded the Medicine Bow range. Since the telegraph line ran via the South pass (North Platte) route, the troops had two lines of communications to keep open. Hence the establishment of an army outpost of Fort Mitchell, near Scotts Bluff, and other outlying points, in spite of the shift southward of the stage lines.

Raids and counter-attacks, battles and massacres, burnings and outrages happened in rapid succession along the stage routes between 1863-5. Mention has been made of battles in the vicinity of Scotts Bluff during this period. The most serious trouble was with the plains Indians. In 1863 General Mitchell, commander of the Nebraska district, and for whom Fort Mitchell was named, held three councils with the Sioux, but each ended in failure. In the spring of 1864 murderous raids on stage stations, wagon trains and white settlements began in earnest, taking an enormous toll of life and property. The whites seemed incapable of concerted action for crushing the raiders.

With the oncoming of winter 1864 the Indians, having had their bellyfull of blood and plunder, were ready for peace and government rations. Military sentiment was in favor of punishing the Indians severely before peace was made. Plans in this direction culminated in the Sand creek massacre in November, 1864, of Black Kettle's band of Cheyennes. By way of reprisal about a thousand warriors swooped down on Julesburg and Fort Rankin (100 miles southeast of Scotts Bluff), killing soldiers and plundering the town (both these affairs are pictured in the new Oregon Trail Museum).

Early in 1865 the South Platte valley was devastated by the savages. Forces stationed at Fort Rankin (later Fort Sedgwick) and Valley station were unable to cope with the situation. Moving north toward the Powder river country, the Indians were opposed indecisively by U. S. Cavalry at Mud Springs (south of present Bridgeport) and at Scotts Bluff.

The Overland Mail service was badly disrupted during these strenuous days, and

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resumed only under strong military protection. Throughout the summer of 1865 Indians continued to harass the stage and telegraph lines and to murder unescorted civilians along the Cherokee trail (Julesburg to Fort Halleck) and along the North Platte (between Scotts Bluff and Fort Laramie). At this time occurred the famous Platte Bridge fight on the site of present Casper, Wyo. As winter approached, the difficulties subsided and a peace treaty was negotiated by General Sanborn on the Arkansas.

Chapter 34 Stage Coach Days

The daily Overland Mail contract for 1864-68 was awarded to Ben Holladay for the service from the Missouri river to Salt Lake City, and to William Dinsmore for service from Salt Lake City to Folsom City, Calif. Trips were made in 16 days eight months of the year, and 20 days the remaining four months.

The main line left Atchison, Kans.; in Nebraska territory it touched Graysons, Big Sandy, Thompson, Kiowa, Little Blue, Liberty farm, Lone Tree, Thirty-two Mile creek, Summit, Hook's, Fort Kearney, Platte station, Craig, Plum creek, Willow Island, Midway, Gilman's, Cottonwood Springs, Cold Springs, Fremont Spring, Elk Horn, Alkali lake, Sand Hill, Diamond spring, South Platte and Julesburg. At certain seasons of the year, determined by the weather, the line swung to the North Platte following the route of the Oregon trail through Mitchell pass to Fort Laramie.

The presiding genius of the Overland Mail during the halcyon middle sixties as Ben Holladay, who controlled nearly 5,000 miles of stage lines, Under his supervision the Overland Mail line was well organized, efficiently conducted, and showed substantial profits.

The Overland Mail which, as a passenger carrier was known as the Overland Stage, was an inevitable and unforgettable, if transient phase of the frontier west. A romantic and desperate crew was the agent or "boss;" the conductor of passengers, the mail guard and the driver of each 200 mile division. A good stage driver, always a picturesque character, commanded a good salary, and regarded his job as a sacred trust. The stations were established at intervals of 10 to 15 miles. Every 50 miles or so were "home stations" where the driver's route ended, and where passengers could obtain meals. Those intervening were called "swing stations." The stations along the Platte were usually one to three-room structures built of hewn logs, with sod roof and dirt floor. Adobe or stone was employed in some of the buildings farther west. Mark Twain gives us a fine description, which probably fitted the isolated stations near Scotts Bluffs, long since disappeared:

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"The station buildings were long, low huts, made of sundried mud-colored bricks, laid up without mortar. The roofs . . . were thatched and sodded or covered with a thick layer of earth, and from this sprang a rank growth of weeds and grass. . . . The buildings consisted of barns, stable-room for 12 or 15 horses, and a hut for an eating-room for the passengers. . . . You had to bend in order to get in at the door. There was no flooring but the ground was packed hard. There was no stove, but the fireplace served all needful purposes. . . . There were no shelves, no cupboards, no closets. The table was a greasy board on stilts."

The famous Concord stage-coach was manufactured by the Abbott-Downing company of Concord, N. H. The coaches usually employed on the "Overland" had provisions for nine passengers, three to a seat and one or more on the outside. Coaches never lacked for passengers, in addition to a substantial load of mail. At times 12 to 15 were crowded in and on top, to swing and sway and joggle across the continent. In 1863 fare from Atchison to Placerville was \$225.

In 1866 Holladay disposed of his holdings to Wells, Fargo and company, who thenceforward controlled practically all express and stage routes west of the Mississippi. During 1867 there were renewed Indian outbreaks, and the Overland route was seriously obstructed from Fort Kearney to the Green river. For a time traffic was again diverted from the Scotts Bluff region to the South Platte.

By the close of 1867 the advancing Union Pacific and Central Pacific railways had replaced a major part of the coach service east of Denver. At the same time branch and parallel lines of coaches were opening new paths and marking the routes for new railroads, such as the Southern or Butterfield route, pioneering for the Southern Pacific railroad. The first transcontinental railroad was completed much sooner than had been anticipated, and the stage contractors lost heavily. When the golden spike was driven at Promontory Point, Utah, May 10, 1869, the Overland stage became automatically defunct; but it had served well in its role as a "promoter of settlement and a precursor of railroads. (See Hafen: The Overland Mail.)

Chapter 35 The Iron Horse

It was quite by chance, as much as engineering logic, that the main line of the Union Pacific—the first transcontinental railroad—followed the "Overland route" up the South Platte rather than the "Oregon-California trail" up the North Platte. As we have seen, Indian depredations of the early sixties decided Holladay to move his stage lines to the more southern route, and there they continued for the most part. Thus it was largely by force of habit, grooved by the overland stage, that the projectors of the iron horse decided against the North Platte valley route. The continuation of Indian hostilities during the first construction period was probably an additional factor in influencing the final decision which left Scotts Bluff excluded from the favored line of communication.

In later years the Burlington and the Union Pacific railroads both located branch lines up the North Platte valley, in recognition of the potential wealth of the region; but the nearest Scotts Bluff came to being a landmark on a great westward trunk line was in August, 1865, when General Grenville M. Dodge reconnoitered the Upper Platte country on horseback. On this trip he located Cheyenne pass that predicated the Lodgepole creek, rather than the North Platte route. But Scotts Bluff did obtain recognition, by a sketch drawn by the general on August 27 of the defile through Mitchell pass.

The initial step in the direction of Pacific railway building was the success of a bill submitted to congress in 1853 by Senator Salmon P. Chase of Ohio, providing for a survey of four routes to the Pacific coast. Jefferson Davis, secretary of war, sent five other surveying corps into the field on his own initiative. One of these surveyed over the "Overland route" between parallels 41 and 42—also known as the "Central" or "Mormon" route.

The years between 1850 and 1860 marked a period of storm and stress in which sectionalism and localism were engaged in drawing and quartering Pacific railway measures. The accomplishment of a transcontinental railway was predestined to await the emergencies of the Civil war. The secession of southern states in 1860-61 silenced sectional opposition.

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The famous enabling act signed by President Lincoln on July 1, 1862, created the "Union Pacific Railroad company," which corporation was "authorized and empowered to lay out, locate, construct, furnish, maintain and enjoy a continuous railroad and telegraph from a point on the 100th meridian of longitude west from Greenwich, between the south margin of the valley of the Republican river and the north margin of the valley of the Platte river, in the territory of Nebraska to the western boundary of Nevada territory. . . .It is also by the bill bond-aided at the rate of \$16,000 per mile, east of the mountains, payable in gold. . . . The track upon the entire railroad and branches shall be of uniform width, to be determined by the president of the United States. . . . The grades and curves shall not exceed the maximum grades and curves of the Baltimore and Ohio railroad. . . . If said roads are not completed so as to form a continuous line of railroad ready for use from the Missouri river to the navigable waters of the Sacramento river in California by the first day of July, 1876, the whole of said railroad. . . shall be forfeited to, and be taken possession of, by the United States."

Contingencies and uncertainties of the Civil war cramped the early growth of the iron horse, but gradually the vision materialized under the leadership of Theodore P. Judah in the west, and Thomas C. Durant and General Dodge in the east.

The enormity of the undertaking is better understood by realizing that the whole route was practically devoid of any construction material except the soil for the grade. Six and a quarter million ties were needed and they must be hewn from trees felled in Michigan and Pennsylvania; 350,000 tons of iron rails and their fittings; all bridge and structural supplies must be wagoned by bull team from central Iowa, at a staggering cost; gold was at a 50 per cent premium; war time stringency; labor scarce and exacting, and a frontier field dangerous from Indian depredations—still no such record for rapid construction has ever been made in the country's history. Exactly three years, six months and ten days to build the road!

Construction was completed to Cheyenne, 100 miles to the south of Scotts Bluff, in

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the fall of 1867. In the Scotts Bluff region, the Indians were particularly hostile, and every mile of the iron horse route had to be built under rifle fire.

The first rail was laid July 10, 1865, along the bottoms between Cut-Off lake and the grade leading through the hills out of Omaha toward the summit. On May 10, 1869, was laid the last tie, of California laurel, finely polished, and ornamented with a silver escutcheon, and the last spikes of solid gold and silver—at Promontory Point, Utah.

The continent was spanned with a ribbon of steel. The union of free states was consolidated. East and west joined hands in commerce, destined to multiply a hundred-fold; thus was formed the industrial backbone of the wealthiest and most powerful of nations.

Chapter 35 Decline of the Red Man

Scotts Bluff played a signal part in the history of the red man. As we have seen, the North Platte valley was a natural corridor for the migration of primitive tribes, as evidenced by the innumerable artifacts of wide variety and source of origin found in this neighborhood. The bluff must have been a landmark, an outpost and a campsite to aboriginal tribes, as well as the westering white man. In historic times, the rapid decline of the red man was witnessed in silent sympathy by the rugged sentinel bluff. Within its very shadow the epic tragedy was enacted in a cycle of peace councils, broken treaties, indignities, depredations, and open warfare.

When the white trappers and traders (Frenchman, Englishman and Spaniard) first invaded his lands, the Indian of the Great Plains was contemptuous of their insignificant numbers. These white men were far too few to become powerful enemies, they brought desirable trade goods (including firewater), and there was enough of nature's bounty for all, anyway. In time the traders intermarried with the Indian tribes and coalitions arose. These opposing combinations often resulted in a few traders and trappers losing their lives, or at best their livestock and supplies, but the total loss of life and property at Indian hands was quite small throughout the period of 1800-1840.

Only with the coming of the Oregon-California emigrants did the Indians begin to realize the power and future of the conquering whites. The buffalo became a little less numerous, and various epidemic diseases began to take an increasing toll of the aborigines. It was not, however, until the throngs of the California emigration, 1849-1859, pushed across the plains, slaughtering countless buffalo, stripping the forage along the migration routes, and filtering out into the Indian country, that the red man began to take positive action. By that time the Pawnees had relinquished all rights (1833) to lands south of the Platte and east of the Forks. North and west of that line were the restless and powerful Teton Dakotas, with their allies, the Cheyennes and Arapahos.

The United States government had placed these Indians, in 1846, in the upper Platte

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and Arkansas agency, under the able old mountaineer, Thomas Fitzpatrick. During his period in office until his death in 1854, there was comparatively little trouble with these Indians. In fact, in 1851, there was engineered, through Fitzpatrick, Father De Smet, Jim Bridger, Robert Campbell, D. C. Mitchell and some others, the greatest peace council ever held in the plains.

In September of 1851, between 8,000 and 12,000 Dakotas, Cheyennes, Arapahos, Crows, Snakes, Rees, Assiniboines and Gros Ventres assembled at Fort Laramie, then moved down to camping grounds at the mouth of Horse creek, 15 miles west of Scotts Bluff. The Arapahos, Cheyennes and Dakotas camped along the north bank of the Platte; the American commissioners occupied the peninsula between the streams; and the troops and visiting tribes encamped around the treaty ground south of Horse creek. Due in part to the presence of De Smet and Fitzpatrick (the two most trusted white men on the Great Plains), the treaty council went smoothly and the Indians promised peace and free passage of emigrants through their lands in return for annual allowances. This treaty was evidently entered into in good faith by all.

In August of 1854, an unfortunate misunderstanding over an emigrant's cow led to the slaughter of Lieut. Grattan and 30 men at a spot about eight miles below Fort Laramie. This massacre was dreadfully revenged the next year by the annihilation of a Brule band (Sioux) on the Blue Water creek, a few miles north of Ash Hollow, in September of 1855, by forces under General Harney. Thereafter the Indians were more wary, but their hatred increases steadily. Solemn treaties and promises of the government to the Indians were repudiated, invalidated, forgotten, or calmly broken by crooked agents, scheming politicians and egotistical whites who held that an Indian had no inherent rights.

In 1861, the Arapahos and the Upper Arkansas Cheyennes were requested, or rather forced, to cede their lands in Nebraska south of the North Platte. This opened wide the road west, but put fear into the hearts of the Indians, who wondered when the Great

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Father in Washington would cease to take their lands away. Already the buffalo was perceptibly reduced in numbers, and starvation often stared the plains Indians in the face. The Civil war among the whites gave the Indians their chance, and the Sioux broke out in Minnesota and Dakota. The movement spread and soon embraced all of the northern plains Indians.

Chapter 37 Decline of the Red Man (Continued)

As we have seen, the Indian, made desperate by the white man's invasion of his hunting grounds, took advantage of the Civil war to launch a grim series of raids and massacres along the border settlements. During the years 1861 to 1865 the Dakotas, Cheyennes and Arapahos terrorised the entire Kansas, Nebraska and Dakota country, the Brule and Ogallala bands of the North Platte valley doing most of the damage.

At the end of the Civil war the army was sent in some force to the Indian frontier, and a council was called for Fort Laramie in June, 1866. Red Cloud (an Ogallala born on the North Platte) and some others bolted the conference, which was leading toward a cession of road rights (the Bozeman trail) through the Dakotas' western hunting grounds. So capably did Red Cloud wage battle that in April, 1868, the Fort Laramie treaty resulted in complete victory for the Dakotas. After this year Red Cloud never fought again against the Americans. During the period July, 1871-August, 1873, Red Cloud and his followers had an agency opposite the mouth of Horse creek, about one mile west of present Henry, Nebr. In September, 1872, there were lodged here (at what became known as the old Red Cloud agency) 6,320 Teton, mainly Ogallalas and Upper Brules; 1,615 Cheyennes; and 1,342 Arapahos. When the agency was moved north in 1873, the Scotts Bluff area saw the last of her Indian children.

The chief effect the Indian wars (1862-76) had upon the Scotts Bluff area, outside of the Indian removal from the agency to a distant reservation was the creation of Fort Mitchell as an adjunct of Fort Laramie. As had already been noted, in 1863 Capt. Shuman of the 11th Ohio cavalry built Camp Shuman two and one-half miles west of Scotts Bluff gap (Mitchell pass) in the northeast corner of the southwest quarter of section 20, township 22N, range 55W. Mention has also been made of raids on stage and Pony Express stations, destruction of telegraph wires, removal of the overland express to the South Platte-Elk Mountain route, and bloody battles between soldiers and Indians at Horse creek, Mitchell pass, and Mud springs (1865). Dr. Brand in the "The History of Scotts Bluff, Nebraska" (from which this account is mainly derived) also mentions that "in the

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fall of 1863 there was held in Horse Creek valley, not far from Scotts Bluff, the greatest war council in the history of plains Indian tribes."

The further story of the Indian in the northern great plains simmers down to two events. Rumors of gold in the Black Hills (known for a generation by De Smet and certain other ethical white men) led the government to send Custer to reconnoitre them in 1874, and Lieut. R. I. Dodge and Prof. Jenney to survey them in 1875. The assurance of great riches led many American prospectors to invade the Black Hills, despite army and Indian prohibitions. The final upshot of the matter was that several American forces were sent into the field, to curb the Indian's wrath. These forces were out-manuevered severally by Crazy Horse, Gall, Sitting Bull and Black Moon of the Sioux and the Cheyennes, and Gen. Custer's forces were wiped out on the Little Big Horn in June, 1876. The Indians, lacking munitions and food, could not resist for any length of time, and they soon capitulated. By treaty of October, 1876, the Dakotas became reservation Indians, and the Black Hills were thrown open.

Like the rush of the fifty-miners, the Black Hills rush followed a financial panic-- that of 1873's Black Friday. From all sides the would-be miners poured in, usually from points on the Union Pacific and Northern Pacific railroads. The two leading outfitting points were Sidney (Sidney Barracks, established in 1867 as a sub-post for Fort Sedgwick on the South Platte; independent in 1870, until abandoned in 1874), and Cheyenne. The Sidney route was a few miles shorter, but somewhat rougher than the Cheyenne road. After 1876 Sidney thrived rapidly as an outfitting town for the mines (205 miles distant). The road, known as "the agencies road," was improved; Clark built a toll bridge over the North Platte at Camp Clark (now Bridgeport); and stages and freight wagons pulled out daily for the northern diggings. This was the last gold strike to affect the Scotts Bluff area.

The Black Hills gold rush also marked an end to Indian influence upon the history of this region, except for the Ghost Dance or Messiah war of 1890, which involved a few misguided Indians in the Dakotas.

Chapter 38 The day of the Cattleman

The last period before the modern one might properly be termed that of the open cattle range. It had its beginnings back in the days of the early Oregon emigrations, as a result of the necessities of emigrants along the Oregon trail. Trading posts, often equipped with "fodder and hay" ranches, would replace two worn-out cattle with one that had been fattening on the ranch or nearby range. These "road ranches" were the first ranches of the northern ranges. Their surplus was often sold in California. This parasitic type of cattle-ranching endured from about 1843-1857.

As early as 1853, however, Seth Ward began to winter cattle in the valleys of the Chugwater and Laramie. In 1854, Majors commenced to winter his freighting oxen in the Laramie valley, and continued to do so for ten years. It is claimed that at the height of the Russell, Majors and Waddell freighting business (to supply troops in Utah) in the winter of 1857-8, this firm had over 15,000 head of cattle on a range in Wyoming-Nebraska just south of the Oregon trail.

Orthodox cattle ranching in the northern great plains began with J. Iliff in northwestern Colorado. New markets had developed in the Colorado gold fields, so Iliff started up a large range cattle business, by stocking with train oxen and stock of the gold-seekers. In time, Iliff became the first northern cattle king, ranging his stock over the South Platte country. The boom in Montana mining, in 1862-5, increased the market for cattle and attracted more men into the cattle business. Soon the cattlemen of Colorado-Wyoming-Nebraska ranges could not get enough cattle to stock their ranges. This lack was quickly remedied.

During the Civil war the cattle in Texas had multiplied, unmarketed and unmolested. After the war there was not a suitable market within a thousand miles of Texas. The Texas ranches were land and cattle poor. About 1866 the southerners began to dream of northern markets. Nelson Story, in 1866, drove a small herd of 600 head of Texas longhorns from Dallas to Montana; and a drive was made from Texas to Sedalia, Mo., on the Missouri Pacific. The idea spread and more drives went north in 1867, which is

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the year that the great Texas drives may properly be said to have begun. Difficulties with the Indians and farmers on the Indian Territory and eastern Kansas shifted these drives westward to a terminus at Abilene, on the Kansas Pacific. In 1867 Iliff began to buy Texas cattle from Goodnight.

The following year, 1868, Texas drives reached stations all along the Kansas Pacific in Kansas and the Union Pacific in Nebraska. The principal trails in Nebraska terminated at Schuyler, Fort Kearney, North Platte, Ogallala, and Pine Bluffs. With the settlement of western Nebraska, Ogallala became the great Nebraska cattle depot. Out of Ogallala cattle were shipped to the eastern stock yards, and driven to western ranges. As yet, since north of the North Platte was Indian territory, the cattle-ranching in the Scotts Bluff country took place mainly in Horse Creek valley. By 1871 there were 12,800 head on Horse creek, and before the close of the year Creighton and Alsop turned 45,000 head loose in this valley. During the years 1876-81 the Sioux country was opened up, and thousands of head of cattle were driven out of Ogallala as stockers for the ranges of northwestern Nebraska, Wyoming, Montana and the Dakotas. In 1883 the huge Swan Land and Cattle company was organizing by combining three cattle properties between Ogallala, Nebr., and Steele, Wyo., and from the Union Pacific to the North Platte.

Rapid inflation of the cattle business was going too far, however. The range became overstocked, barbwire was introduced in 1874-77, and western Nebraska was invaded by grangers in 1885 to 1887. The year 1887 saw the bottom drop out of the cattle business, which had reached its peak two or three years earlier. Since about 1887 or 1888 the cattle ranchers of the Scotts Bluff area have broken up their holdings, fenced in their lands, and turned to scientific and intensive cattle-raising. The day of the open range and the gamboleering cowboy has gone forever. (See "The History of Scotts Bluff, Nebraska" by Dr. Donald D. Brand.)

Chapter 39 Why Scotts Bluff National Monument?

Having devoted so much space to the story of Scotts Bluff, it should be obvious why the federal government has designated this conspicuous feature of the North Platte Valley landscape as a national monument. This monument, which was created December 12, 1919, memorializes not so much the historic significance of the bluff itself and the few square miles of adjacent area, but rather the numberless migrations that have passed, since time immemorial, over the many trails that converge upon the North Platte. In particular it is a symbol of the old Oregon Trail, on which it served as a landmark to countless thousands of emigrants westward bound on the march of empire.

Visible evidence of the old Oregon Trail has disappeared almost entirely in Nebraska, owing to extensive cultivation, on the one hand, and rapid aeolian erosion on the other. However, on the monument area, which is not arable, and protected to some extent from the periodic high winds, the route of the time-honored Trail can be traced almost entirely. That it has been preserved here can also be attributed to the fact that the emigrants were compelled by the nature of the terrain to concentrate in a comparatively narrow passageway instead of spreading out indefinitely in parallel columns. As a result the ruts were worn to maximum depth and vegetation all but annihilated.

The main Trail proceeded in a straight east-west line through Mitchell Pass, following closely the modern state highway, known locally as the Oregon Trail Highway. To judge by appearances, and the testimony of old-timers, it originally continued west beyond the Pass for some distance, and then dropped into a ravine; but repeated ambushes by white renegades and hostile Indians compelled a change; so that later it swerved almost due north after emerging from the Pass, and meandered towards Fort Mitchell, which was located on a sharp bend in the river, about two and one-half miles from the Pass. Most of the Trail on the sections mentioned is distinctly visible, in places showing a depth of several feet. However, it has almost disappeared in the

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Pass itself, which is studded with badland cones, subject to violent erosion.

About a mile east of the present museum building the Trail branched to the northwest, heading directly for the spring, which was something of an oasis. Then, it returned directly from the spring to the main Trail just east of the Pass, so that the Trail describes a huge triangle east of the bluffs, with a perimeter of two and one-half miles.

The width of the Trail as it survives on the area varies from four to twelve feet. It is in no way uniform. At one point it is a narrow smooth defile; at another, a series of parallel ruts are faintly visible through a tangle of weeds and sunflowers. Its most striking manifestation is a double depression at the top of a ridge on the west slope of the bluff.

Ranchmen and farmers, with little or no historical perspective, have apparently used the Trail near the bluffs at certain sections as a wagon road and truck-trail, to desecrate the wealth of pines and cedars which once grew on the slopes. Cattle trails coinciding with the ruts are evident. There are also several obsolete unsightly roads, used in recent years by motorists, criss-crossing by the area and intersecting the authentic Trail at several points. To the untrained observer all of these roads looks as if they might have been the Oregon Trail; and conversely, the Oregon Trail as certain points looks like just another country lane. However, certain earmarks of the authentic Trail readily distinguish it: its depth, its width, parallel fissures, textures of the soil, thinness of vegetation, its logical orientation, and an indefinable stamp of antiquity. The other non-historic, confusing roadways are being obliterated as a part of the recently inaugurated improvement program.

Mention has already been made of another historic feature of the national monument—Scott's Spring, on the east slope of the bluff. Whether Hiram Scott, the unfortunate namesake of this monument, died at the spring on the east slope of Scotts Bluff proper or the one ten miles to the west at Roubidoux Pass will probably never be decided to

Chapter 39 Why Scotts Bluff National Monument?(Continued)

everyone's satisfaction. But, supposing that it could be finally proven one way or another, the net effect on the historical importance of the spring would be slight. Its chief claim to distinction is that it was something of an oasis for ever-thirsty trappers and explorers and, during the later emigration period, formed the nucleus for a huge campsite. We have the testimony of eye-witnesses, in addition to inevitable deductions of our own, that Scotts Bluff, with its cool delicious spring, its wealth of trees for shade and firewood, and its massive protection against the elements, was a favorite stopping place for the home-and-gold-seekers of the fifties and sixties.

Chapter 40 Telling the Story of Scotts Bluff

The National Park Service, assisted mainly by Public Works administration and Emergency Conservation works, began an improvement program at the Scotts Bluff National monument in 1933, in order to focus public attention upon its importance as a national historical monument, and to provide facilities for recreation and public education in keeping with the standards of other areas administered by the Service.

In 1933 work was begun on a road to the summit of the bluff. The object of this development was primarily to emphasize the historical background of the bluff, by enabling all visitors to ascend the summit, from which a birds-eye panorama of the historic North Platte valley is obtainable. The scenic aspect is secondary. Grading and tunneling work was continued intermittently until November of 1937, when it was completed. The summit road, however, will not be open to the public until the road is paved, and construction of guard-rails, retaining walls and tunnel portals is completed. It is expected that this work will be started about April, 1937.

PWA funds were used to construct a strong brick museum building with full basement. This museum, which was opened July 16, 1936, to coincide with the Oregon Trail Days celebration, contains as permanent exhibits 140 water color paintings, showing successive phases in the development of the old west, and two large dioramas, illustrating methods of the buffalo hunters. In addition, there is a large collection of historical relics, such as buffalo skulls, firearms, hand-forged implements, ox-yokes and pioneer inscriptions. A collection of historical maps, and a library devoted to the lore and tradition of the western frontier, are growing gradually.

It is planned that the present museum wing will be augmented eventually with two additional wings, one devoted to the subject of archeology and ethnology; the other devoted to exhibits in geology and paleontology. Permanent exhibits are being planned for these additional wings, as they were for the historical wing, by the Field Division of Education of the National Park Service, with laboratories in Berkeley, Calif.

The biggest factor in recent developments has been the presence of a CCC camp on

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the monument, established in May, 1935, and still operating. Improvements completed by the aid of CCC enrollees include the development of a fine picnic area in the southwest corner of the monument, beyond Mitchell pass; the construction and development of high-grade truck trails to the picnic area, and along the Gering canal near the north boundary; fencing the boundary and erection of cattle-guards; obsolete road obliteration; construction of signs and boundary markers; restoration and development of Scott's spring; roadway and foot-rail maintenance; building of checkdams, landscaping, erosion control and the beginning of a reforestation project; seed collection; construction of adobe walls and adobe equipment shed at the headquarters area; collection of specimens in paleontology and archeology.

Projects now under way or contemplated for the near future include additional reforestation, landscaping, erosion control and seed collection; construction of adobe residence for ranger; adobe comfort station and adobe wing to the museum building; expansion of the Mitchell pass picnic area; additional signs and boundary markers; and drainage control.

The educational program as sponsored by the National Park Service will revolve mainly around the museum. In addition it is proposed to have regular guided trips over the old Oregon Trail, the foot-trail to the summit, and on the summit; also educational bulletins and public lectures.

The present administration consists of a custodian (Mr. Charles E. Randals, acting), and a historian. A temporary ranger-historian is also provided for, to assist in the educational program during the summer months.

During 1936 over 60,000 people visited Scotts Bluff National monument by actual count from May 1 to January 31. Over 15,000 names have been registered at the new Oregon Trail museum during its brief existence. With the completion of the summit road, and the expansion of the museum, it is confidently expected that during 1937 an even greater number of patriotic Americans will visit Scotts Bluff National Monument--an

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everlasting memorial to the exploration and settlement of the far west.

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