

REPRESENTATIONS OF PLAINS INDIANS ALONG THE OREGON TRAIL

by

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Abstract

Monuments and memorials are how we record history on the landscape. History is created, preserved, and remembered by those who envision, design, and ultimately pay a visit to, these sites. The Oregon Trail is replete with interpretive sites relating to various events and people who lived along or traveled this route. From Independence, Missouri to Fort Laramie National Historic Site in Wyoming along the Great Plains section of the trail, Plains Indians are represented in thirty-two sites that convey various versions of history. The majority of these sites, twenty-seven, either ignore the Plains Indians or turn them into a stereotypical form of Sioux. These two representations give a sense that “No One is Home” or that “Siouxification” has occurred, a process by applying Sioux cultural traits to non-Sioux Plains Indians. The other five sites are categorized as “Getting It Right.” These sites either portray an accurate or close-to-accurate representation of the Indians and their role along the Oregon Trail. “No One is Home” is found all throughout the trail; “Siouxification” is clustered in the eastern study area; and “Getting It Right” primarily in the eastern portion.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my father, John Abbott. He was always with me and traveled along the trail with me. He will always be my trail guide. I miss you, dad.

CHAPTER 1 - “Trail Guide”: The Introduction to the Thesis

Introduction

The Great Plains was described as the Great American Desert during the time of the Oregon Trail (National Park Service 2005, 3). The alleged desert was not deserted, though. Indian nations such as the Sioux, Pawnee, and Kaw lived in the Plains for centuries. Other tribes such as the Potawatomi, Delaware, and Shawnee were forced to relocate from their woodland homes to the Plains. The Oregon Trail affected all these unique nations as hundreds of thousands of emigrants crossed tribal lands. Indians interacted with emigrants and helped make the epic Oregon Trail possible.

The Oregon and related trails have been remembered throughout the years. Contemporary works on the trail came in the form of letters to families from the pioneers, published newspaper accounts, and dime novels. Literature like *Esther: A Story of the Oregon Trail* and *Quindara, or, the Heroine of Fort Laramie* gave the public romantic visions of what their fellow countrymen were experiencing (Tate 2006). Historic societies began to form in the late 1800s as nostalgia for the trail formed in the minds of the now settled emigrants. These groups published diaries and recollections of those who traveled in the wagon trains. With the Civil War and completion of the transcontinental railroad, Oregon Trail travel ebbed during the 1860s. The Western genre arose in the late 1800s and early 1900s and popularized many now commonly-held beliefs about the Oregon Trail. Ideas like the wagon train of families alone in the wilderness subjected to a raid of savage Indians became cemented in the popular culture. The rise of the motion picture industry in the twentieth-century led to the creation of movies like *How the West Was Won* and television shows like *Wagon Train* that propagated stereotypes of trail experiences to the Baby Boomer generation (Tate 2006). Newer generations became familiar with the Oregon Trail with games like *The Oregon Trail* and its sequels (Figure 1.1).

Besides media portrayals, another way people learn about the Oregon Trail is by actually traveling along the trail itself. The federal government, state governments, local governments, non-profit groups, and corporations have all been active in commemorating spots for tourists to see along the Oregon Trail. These sites interpret specific events, places, people, or general history by creating representations of the trail.

Although Indians were not as necessary to the survival of the various overland trails as certain tribes were to Lewis and Clark, they nonetheless played a critical role in the epic. Indians served as guides to many wagon trains for short distances, they rescued lost animals and even lost emigrants, they operated bridges and ferries, they bartered for needed goods, and they allowed passage through their lands. For every reference of hostile Indian encounters there are countless more of friendly interactions like those of Hugh Cosgrove who described Indians as exotic yet friendly and pleasant (Lyman 1900).

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how Indians who were located on the Great Plains at the time of the mass emigration are presently depicted along the Oregon Trail Auto Tour landscape. To understand the portrayal several questions need to be asked.

- First, are Indians represented at each site? Some places along the Oregon Trail have little history dealing directly with Indians. For example, Rock Creek Station, now a major Nebraska state historical park along the trail, has no shared history with the Pawnee. However, there is history between emigrants and Indians in the area.
- Second, why or why not are Indians depicted at the site? The Robidoux Station site in western Nebraska ignores the seedier history of emigrant-Indian relations. A puritan moral agenda is active in suppressing the prostitution trade.
- Third, how are Indians portrayed? Are the Indians realistic or are they mere caricatures of what emigrants would have encountered? Do the Indians portrayed have local significance in the area or for the trail in general?

These three questions form the basis of the categorization of Plains Indians representations along the Oregon Trail. The various representations break down into three categories. The first category I call “No One is Home.” Depictions that fall into “No One is Home” include those which either ignore the Indian presence or sideline the presence to near meaningless. A common example of “No One is Home” is a piece of artwork which shows a wagon train traveling west through a particular region with a few Indians in the background merely observing the emigrants.

Towards the end of the Indian Wars the government engaged in the practice of “Lakotization” (Abbott 2005). Lakotization was the destruction of the Lakota by the American government and army; the primary goal was ending the Indian Wars. During the late 1800s the

United States engaged in a war against the very culture of the Lakota and other resistant tribes in order to defeat them. Families were torn apart, native language forbidden, and punishment was severe. The very essence of being an Indian was lost for generations. What became an “Indian” in the public culture was a mish-mash of stories, some accurate and many not, from a variety of sources. The stereotyped Plains Indian became the template for all Indians (Sturtevant 2001, 732) and are, therefore, the focus of this thesis. And the tribe which fits the mold for the “ideal” Plains Indian is the Sioux. The “Siouxified” category, which is the second category of Plains Indians portrayals in this thesis, groups the representations that inaccurately give Sioux traits to non-Sioux tribes.

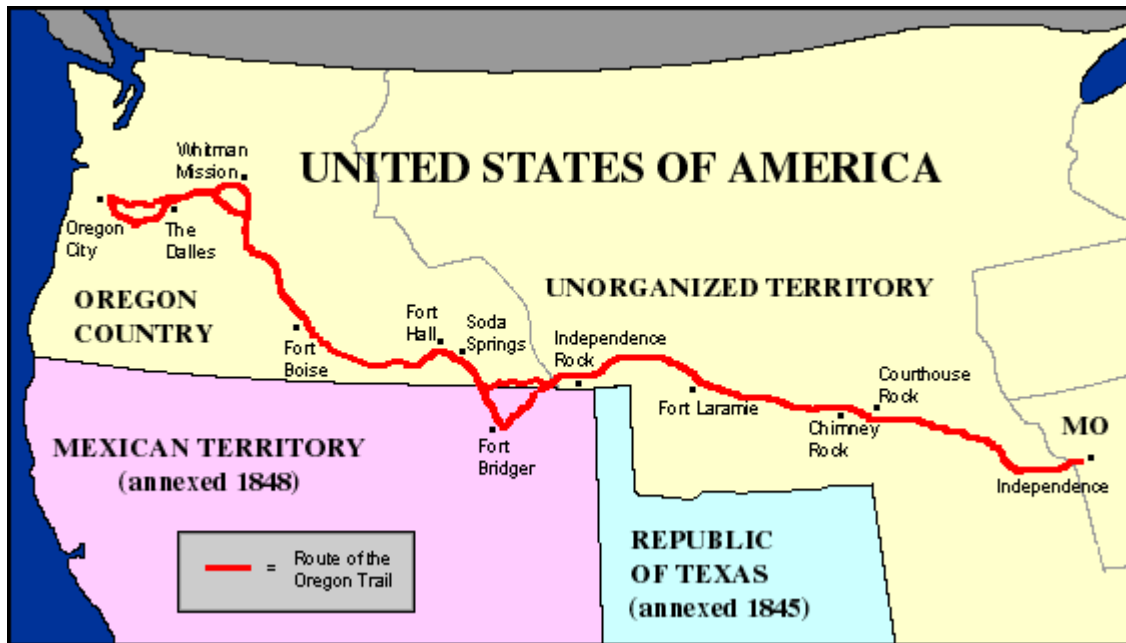
The first two categories deal with erroneous interpretations of Indians. Minimizing the role of Indians and depicting all Indians as Sioux-like are the two mischaracterizations of Indians along the trail. The final theme deals with the times when the depictions are historically correct or close to accurate. “Getting It Right” investigates how and why these memorials inform accurately about Indians along the Oregon Trail.

The depictions within these three themes are examined spatially as well. Questions that prompt me to look for spatial patterns include: Are representations in the same category clustered together or found all along the Great Plains section of the trail? What is the distance and difficulty of access to the sites from the auto tour? Are certain sites right along the roadside or is there a distance decay of some thematic sites? Finally, there is to be a temporal analysis at sites. Do newer sites tend to be more accurate in their depictions of Indians?

Geography of the Oregon Trail

The Oregon Trail crosses the interior of the United States. The trail was over 2,000 miles long with the traditional start point of Independence, Missouri and end point of Oregon City, Oregon Territory.

Figure 1.1: Map of the Oregon Trail with popular cutoffs. Source: MECC 1996.



The first part of the Oregon Trail is the Great Plains section from Independence, Missouri to the area of Fort Laramie, Wyoming. Many overlanders commented of the lush fields of grass that grew here (Parkman 1982). Emigrants followed the Kansas River past Saint Marys, where a northwest path was taken paralleling the Big and Little Blue Rivers into Nebraska. Around Fort Kearny, Oregon Trail emigrants began to follow the Platte River westward. As the emigrants travelled towards Fort Laramie the physical geography of the trail began to change. The lush, open river plains decreased in size. Grass became noticeably shorter. Most impressively, huge bluffs and rock formations like Chimney Rock, Courthouse and Jailhouse rocks, and Scotts Bluff became signposts of an unfamiliar physical landscape for many of the emigrants.

The Great Plains ended for the overlanders when they reached the Fort Laramie area, as mountain peaks loomed on the horizon. The pioneers at this point along the Oregon Trail were in the foothills and continued to follow the Platte River as it began to dwindle. The emigrants

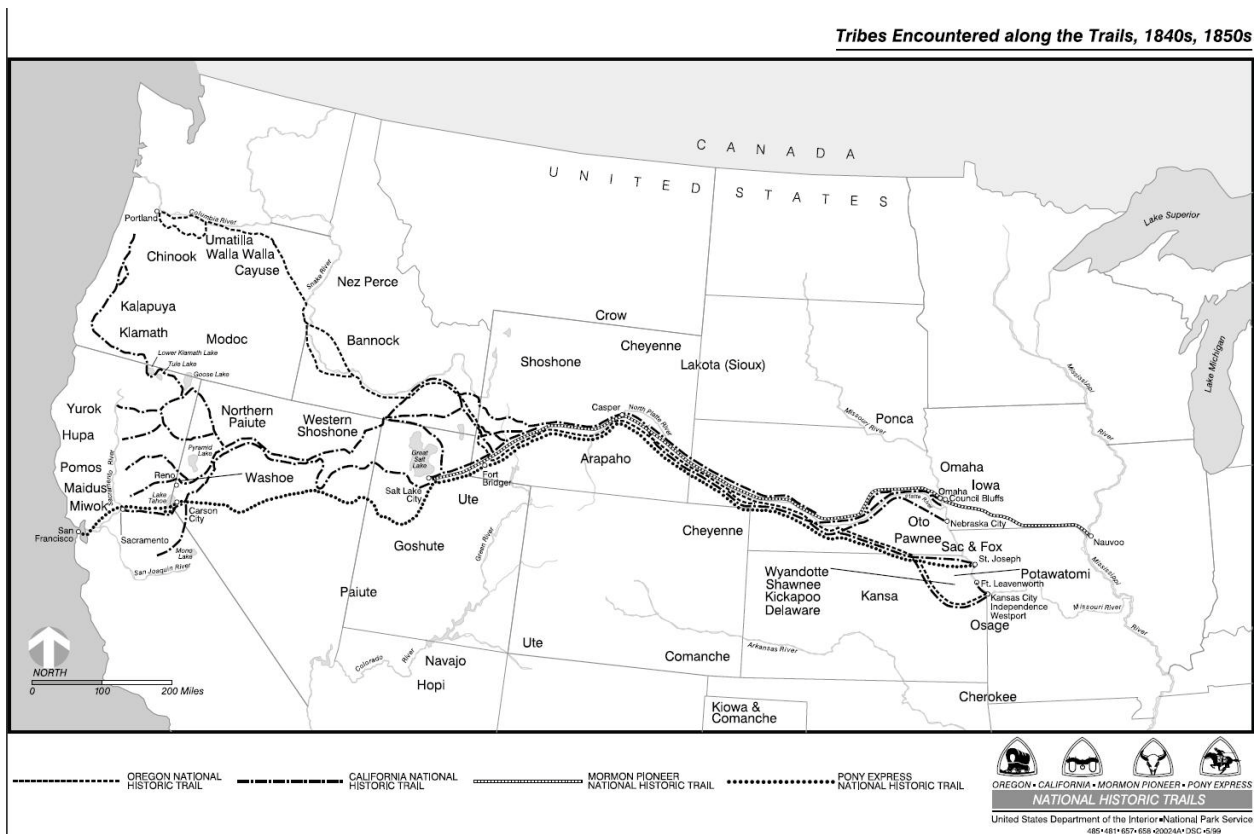
left the Platte River and continued west, crossing present-day Wyoming. Along their journey in central present-day Wyoming, they followed, and ultimately crossed three times, the Sweetwater River. The trail's elevation reached a climax at South Pass, which served as the gateway through the continental divide. The emigrants then crossed the Green River. Not only was this area poorly mapped and understood by many emigrants, it was also beyond the United States border for part of the Oregon Trail era. A portion of the trail land belonged to Mexico until 1848, and the Oregon Territory was contested between the United States and the United Kingdom until 1846, when the Oregon Treaty was signed. Even then the major places for resupplying, such as Fort Hall, Fort Boise, and Fort Vancouver belonged to the British-owned Hudson Bay Company.

The last geographic region of the Oregon Trail that emigrants encountered was the Cascade Range in present-day Oregon. This region was more humid than the semi-barren interior section of the trail. Salmon-filled rivers and foothills of the Cascade Range provided for a much different realm than the emigrants had grown accustomed to while travelling. The last stretch involved either rafting down the Columbia River or trekking over the Barlow Toll Road for roughly eighty miles. The traditional end of the Oregon Trail was Oregon City. Here the territory was populated, with the city serving as the capital of the extralegal, pro-United States Provisional Government of Oregon from 1841 to 1848; afterwards it was the first capital of Oregon Territory from 1848 to 1851.

Plains Indians

The path of the Oregon Trail cut through the lands of American Indians. Some of nations had been settled in their contemporary location for centuries, others for decades, and some for just a few years. Regardless of their length of inhabitation of the area each tribal nation considered it their home.

Figure 1.2: Map of the different Indians nations along the Oregon Trail. Source: National Park Service 1999.



Once emigrants on the Oregon Trail crossed over the Missouri border they were in United States’ government designated Indian territory. The first Plains Indian lands to be crossed belong to the Kaw. The Kaw, also known as the Kansa or Kansas Indians, are a Siouan people that migrated into present-day Kansas in the mid-1700s (Sturtevant 2001, 471). Much of the Kansas-portion of the Oregon Trail was in Kaw lands until an 1846 treaty relocated the Kaw population around present-day Council Grove, Kansas (Sturtevant 2001, 463). The Kaw were semi-sedentary with a lifestyle that factored in both hunting and agriculture (Sturtevant 2001, 465). Reflecting this complex living arrangement was the fact that Kaw’s had five different types of living structures, three permanent and two mobile structures used for long hunting expeditions (Sturtevant 2001, 465).

By the time of the Oregon Trail the Kaw had been immensely affected by American encroachment. Oregon Trail traveler Francis Parkman wrote about how the Kaw were walking in and out of the shops of Independence, Missouri (Parkman 1982, 8). Around present-day

Topeka several Kaw Indians ran a ferry operation across the Kansas River for a fee (Tate 2006, 27). A Catholic missionary who travelled the Oregon Trail wrote about how Kaw Indian traders would frequently be seen along the opening part of the trail trying to trade with emigrants (Lempfrit 1985, 57).

The next major Indian nation encountered along the Great Plains section of the Oregon Trail was not a Plains Indian nation. The Potawatomi traditionally lived with their closest relatives, the Chippewa and Ottawa, in southwest Michigan and northwest Illinois (Sturtevant 1979, 725). In the 1840s, a relocation process from the Great Lakes area to present-day Kansas was started and became known as the Potawatomi's own "trail of tears" (Hoobler 1993, iv). The treaty moving the Potawatomi to Kansas was one of the last of the fifty-four treaties they signed with the United States' government (Sturtevant 1979, 736).

The Potawatomi had several distinct features that differentiated them from the traditional Plains Indians besides being new migrants to the area. First, the Potawatomi were very much interbred with French North Americans, and a majority of Potawatomi may have been Roman Catholic (Sturtevant 1979, 737). The European and American cultural lifestyle spread among Potawatomis with the eventual results including early U.S. citizenship for many, and Charles Curtis, a member of the nation, becoming Vice President of the United States of America. Second, their lifestyle was much more permanently settled in one place compared to the nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes of the Great Plains. A variety of permanent structures were used while squash, corn, and localized hunting supplied most of the food (Sturtevant 1979, 734). This is not to say that all Potawatomi avoided Plains culture. The Potawatomis would eventually split into two bands: the Citizen Band and the Prairie Band (Edmunds 1987, 275).

The greatest impact the Potawatomi had on the trail was in the trail towns of Uniontown, Kansas, featured in chapter four, and Saint Marys, Kansas, featured in chapter five. These towns not only supplied goods for emigrants but also challenged the stereotypes the emigrants had of the Plains Indians.

The Pawnee were the next major Plains Indian nation to have interaction with emigrants along the Oregon Trail. The Pawnee were a semi-sedimentary tribe whose range was between the last parts of the trail in Kansas to central Nebraska (Sturtevant 2001, 515). Before the arrival of European goods, the balance between hunting and agriculture with the Pawnee had leaned towards agriculture, and thus a more permanent lifestyle (Sturtevant 2001, 525). Horses and

metal products allowed for much greater food production and therefore increased population (Sturtevant 2001, 525). The increased population damaged local environments around villages and forced a more nomadic, hunting life-style (Sturtevant 2001, 525).

Early on the Pawnee were viewed as mysterious and feared by many emigrants (Parkman 1982, 357). However, by 1846 pressure from the Sioux's ethnic cleansing of Pawnee forced the Pawnee to abandon much of their western Nebraska territory (Sturtevant 2001, 520). After this time period the Sioux became the great feared tribe while the Pawnee became less of a factor along the trail (Utley 1967, 318). The Pawnee would later becoming willing agents of the United States in a combined campaign against the Sioux (Utley 1967, 319).

The final great Indian nation along the Great Plains section of the Oregon Trail was the Sioux. The Oglala and Brule bands of the Teton Lakota Sioux, commonly referred to as Teton Sioux, lived in present-day South Dakota, western Nebraska, and southeastern Wyoming (Sturtevant 2001, 794). The Sioux of the Oregon Trail area have commonly been attributed to being the archetype of what many people think of Indians because of their teepees, buffalo hunting, dress, and conflict against the United States (Sturtevant 2001, 732). The Teton Sioux practiced big game hunting and foraging (Sturtevant 2001, 803-804). The lifestyle this diet pattern supported was nomadic and thus forced the Teton Sioux to require a large living space (Sturtevant 2001, 801). The nomadic lifestyle created a sense of egalitarianism in which men hunted and women butchered and distributed the meat through a merit/welfare system (Sturtevant 2001, 805).

While the high points of influence for the Kaw, Potawatomi, and Pawnee were ebbing, the Sioux's sway over the Great Plains was on the rise during the Oregon Trail era. The Great Smoke Treaty in 1851, discussed further in chapter five, was one of the first treaties between the Sioux and the United States government. The next few years involved a series of skirmishes and more treaties. After the end of the Oregon Trail era in 1860, more conflict arose, resulting in a series of wars that only ended after the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890.

While there were some Sioux attacks against Oregon Trail emigrants (Dary 2005, 292) most estimates based on trail diaries show how Indian attacks were exceedingly rare, and even the fear of emigrants being attacked by Indians was greatly hyped by subsequent portrayals of the Oregon Trail in popular media culture. Lakota Sioux actually aided the in rescue of

overlanders (Tate 2006, 78) and were repeatedly featured in trail diaries of emigrants as traders who were willing to seek mutually beneficial deals.

Study Area

There is no one Oregon Trail. The trail started at several different towns known as “jumping-off” towns, including Independence, Westport, and St. Joseph, in Missouri and Council Bluffs, Iowa. Even when the trails from the different jumping-off points would meet up there still was no one trail. Wagon trains were forced to seek out a route unspoiled by previous groups of emigrants. Oxen needed fresh grass for forage and the wagon train members sought unspoiled camp sites for better access to fuelwood and less risk of cholera (Franzwa 1997, 31). The Platte River Valley’s flatness allowed the Oregon Trail to spread out over a mile in width and on both the north and south banks (Franzwa 1997, 29).

Nevertheless, the image of a single trail was perpetuated when the United States Congress approved the creation of the Oregon National Historic Trail in 1978 (National Park Service 1998, IV). Only the “primary router,” the 1848 route from Independence to Oregon City, was authorized as the Oregon National Historic Trail (National Park Service 1998, 4). The primary 1848 Independence route of the Oregon Trail, and therefore the Oregon National Historic Trail, was mapped by Gregory Franzwa for his atlas, *Maps of the Oregon Trail* (1990), and book, *The Oregon Trail Revisited* (Franzwa 1997, 48).

The Oregon National Historic Trail makes a poor study area, though. Because it is based on a pathway created well before the area was settled by American pioneers, the Oregon National Historic Trail frequently goes off road, through private property, and crosses rivers at presently inaccessible points. Thus, the thirty-three interpretive sites along the Oregon National Historic Trail Auto Tour form the basis for this study area (Table 1.1). The auto tour follows the general route of the Oregon National Historic Trail (National Parks Service 2005, 1). The main difference between the two is that the auto tour stays on federal or state highways the entire time except once: a six mile path of three roads; Carlson Road, 42nd Street, and Rossville Road, in eastern Kansas between Interstate 70 and US 24. The auto tour is the most likely path for Oregon Trail tourists. Since the thesis deals with depictions that are meant to inform tourists, the target audience, it makes the most sense to have the study area centered on the auto tour.

Table 1.1: Interpretive Sites Examined on the Oregon National Historic Trail Auto Tour

Name of Site	Location of Site
Jackson County Courthouse Square	Independence, Missouri
National Frontier Trails Museum	Independence, Missouri
New Santa Fe Cemetery	Kansas City, Missouri
Shawnee Indian Mission State Historic Park	Kansas City, Kansas
Kansas Museum of History	Topeka, Kansas
Herbert Reinhard Green Memorial Wildlife Park	Willard, Kansas
Citizen Potawatomi Community Building	Rossville, Kansas
Indian Pay Station Museum	Saint Marys, Kansas
Oregon Trail Nature Park	Belvue, Kansas
Louis Vieux Family Graves	Belvue, Kansas
Wamego City Museum	Wamego Kansas
Oregon Trail Park at Scott Springs	Westmoreland, Kansas
Rock Creek Valley Historical Society Museum	Westmoreland, Kansas
Blue Rapids Murals	Blue Rapids, Kansas
Waterville Mural	Waterville, Kansas
Alcove Springs	Marysville, Kansas
Marysville Mural	Marysville, Kansas
Pony Express Original Home Station #1	Marysville, Kansas
Historic Trails Park	Marysville, Kansas
Hollenburg Pony Express Station State Historic Site	Hanover, Kansas
Rock Creek Station State Historical Park	Endicott, Nebraska
Pioneer Village	Minden, Nebraska
Fort Kearny State Historical Park	Kearney, Nebraska
Great Platte River Road Archway Monument	Kearney, Nebraska
Museum of Nebraska Art	Kearney, Nebraska
100th Meridian Museum	Cozad, Nebraska
Ash Hollow State Historical Park	Lewellen, Nebraska
Pioneer Trails Museum	Bridgeport, Nebraska

Chimney Rock National Historic Site	Bayard, Nebraska
Scotts Bluff National Monument	Gering, Nebraska
“The Great Smoke” Marker	Henry, Nebraska
Grattan Monument	Lingle, Wyoming
Fort Laramie National Historic Site	Fort Laramie, Wyoming

Since the thesis focuses on Plains Indians, the study area is the Great Plains section of Oregon National Historic Trail Auto Tour from Independence, Missouri to Fort Laramie, Wyoming. There is, however, no absolute boundary of the Great Plains (Rossum and Lavin, 2000). The United States Geological Survey considers Independence, Missouri a considerable distance away from the Great Plains (Trimble 1980), but academics who specialize in the Great Plains like Dr. David Wishart have the boundary of the plains right up against the Missouri River (Wishart 2004). I include Independence in the study area because it is the origin point for the auto tour. Plains Indians, such as the Kaw, visited Independence during trail years (Parkman 1982, 51). I chose Fort Laramie National Historic Site in Wyoming as the terminating point of this study because of geographical reasons. At the fort the Platte River Valley’s size is reduced immensely. On the horizon Laramie Peak is visible as a symbolic marker of the end of the Great Plains and beginning of the Rocky Mountains.

A zone of five miles from each side of the auto tour is included as part of the study area. This was thought necessary because not all sites dealing with the Oregon Trail are immediately along the auto tour. Although sites like Ash Hollow in Nebraska and the Pony Express Original Home Station #1 in Kansas are along on the auto tour, others sites such as National Frontier Trails Museum (Independence, Missouri), Chimney Rock National Historic Site (Nebraska), and Fort Laramie National Historic Site (Wyoming) involve short side trips. Tourists who travel the auto tour are likely to journey off it for short trips to visit sites. Based on my travels along the trail, anything beyond five miles was far less likely to be visited by the majority of travelers. Field research showed there were no significant sites farther than the five mile buffer.

Only depictions from the peak era the Oregon Trail activity, 1843 to 1860, are considered. The first “Great Migration” on the Oregon Trail occurred on May 22, 1843 (Studer 1995, 183). Before this, the main traffic on the trails were missionaries and traders, not settlers. The end date of peak activity on the trail is considered 1860 because trail traffic tapered off

dramatically due to the Civil War and increased hostility with various Plains tribes. After the Civil War, wagon traffic declined even more with the completion of the transcontinental railroad. Therefore, the period between 1843 and 1860 is the era when the encounters of Indians and emigrants along the trail were most significant.

Maps of the Study Area

The maps depict the study area in both large and medium scale. The medium scale map shows the Oregon National Historic Trail Auto starting at Independence, Missouri and ending at Fort Laramie in Wyoming (Fig. 1.3). The two medium scale maps show significant interpretive locations along the Great Plains section of the auto tour (Figs. 1.4 and 1.5).

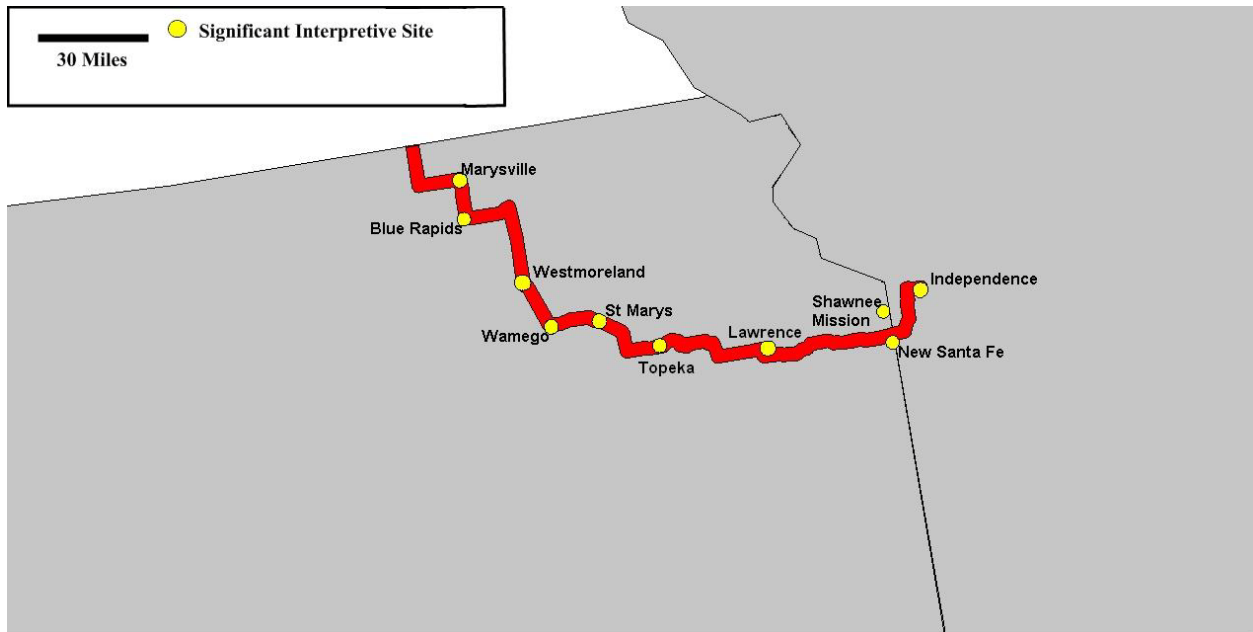
Public, open data and free computer software were used to create the maps. I accessed the National Parks Service website to obtain information on the auto tour route. Next I traced the states and auto route on Google Earth and saved the shapes as KML files. I converted the KML files to the standard GIS format using the program KML2SHP. The GIS files were then compiled using the free GIS software tool fGIS. I then saved the map as an image and transferred over to the open-source Paint.net. The addition of legends, titles, and touching up various small graphical blemishes was the final step.

Figure 1.3: Map of the Study Area



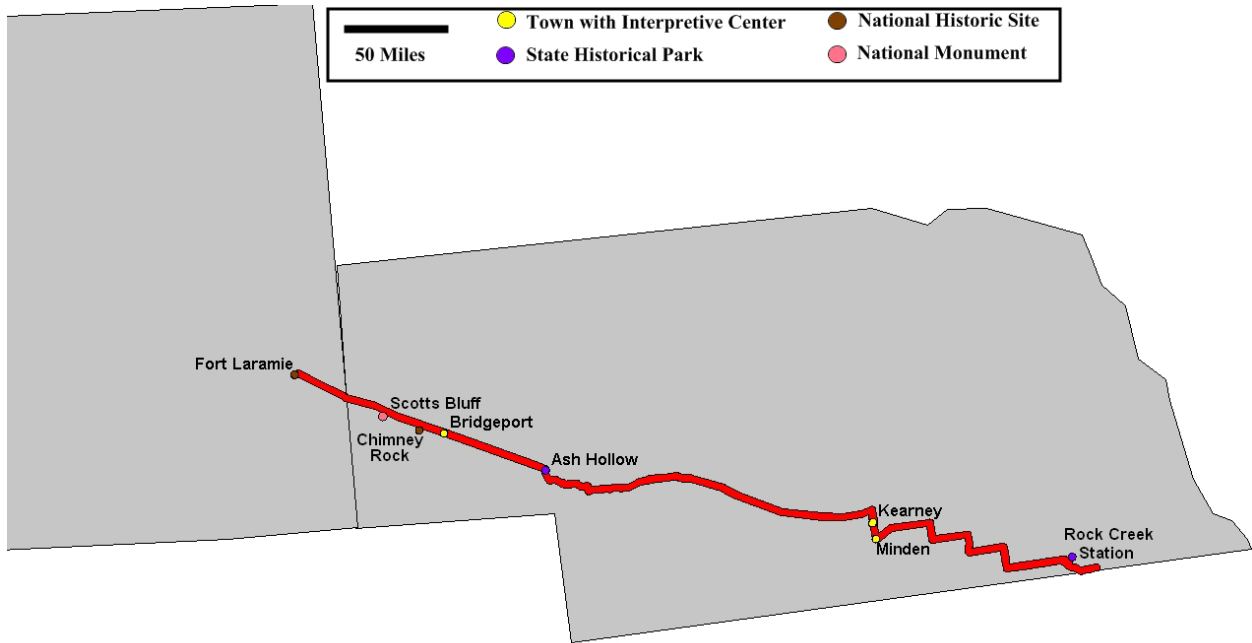
Study Area - Great Plains Section of the Oregon National Historic Trail Auto Tour

Figure 1.4: Detail of Eastern Study Area



Oregon National Historic Trail Auto Tour in Missouri and Kansas

Figure 1.5: Detail of Western Study Area



Oregon National Historic Trail Auto Tour in Nebraska and Eastern Wyoming

Research Methods

Literature analysis and field research methods are both critical in this work of cultural geography. This section describes the significance to this study of literature on the Oregon Trail, Indian-White Relations around the mid-nineteenth century, and guidebooks about the modern Oregon National Historic Trail. In my field work I examined interpretative sites, conversed with those who worked some of the more complex sites, and accessed site literature such as pamphlets to gain a greater understanding of the interpretation background.

Reflexivity

Cultural geographers and others who study various aspects of culture have pointed out that bringing up the issue of reflexivity is important because our own biases influence what information is gathered and what information is ignored, what questions are raised or not asked, and what interpretations we make (Pini 2004, 176). My membership in the Oregon-California Trail Association affects this research. The association is primarily concerned with preservation of the overland emigration trails, and secondarily undertakes education efforts and research. It is

an activist organization with a website featuring a “Legislation” section that encourages members and non-members alike to write their congressional representatives to support the agenda of the association. In 2007, the association encouraged support for Senate Bill S. 580 and House of Representative Bill H.R. 1336 (Legislation 2006). These bills would support further study of the various routes of the Oregon, California, Mormon, and Pony Express Trails. I support the activism of the Oregon-California Trail Association and agree with its view that preserving the overland emigration period history on the landscape is vital to America.

One of the reasons I joined the Oregon-California Trail Association is because I have always had interests in the fields of history and geography. The application of these two fields in the study of the various American Indians have been of particular interest of me. The very first college research project I undertook was a spatial archaeological, or archaeological-geographical, study of Eminija Mounds right outside my hometown of Brandon, South Dakota. The mounds were burials of late Woodlands-period Arikara who lived near the confluence of the Big Sioux River and Split Rock Creek. The study examined how the Arikara lived their daily lives in a semi-nomadic state that was slowly becoming more settled. It also investigated ceremonial life and its impacts on the landscape.

The study gave me a deep respect for the Arikara in particular and Indian tribes in general. It allowed me to dispel the popular stereotypes of Indians. More importantly the paper made me realize the pre-European Contact Indians shared the same landscape I did and were indeed a part of American history.

I was very disappointed in the outcome of my study because my report was ignored by people who felt that all Indians were the same. Bones of an Arikara were found nearby during the construction of a new elementary school (Melmer 2004). The remains were given to the local Flandreau Santee Sioux tribe for reburial. The idea was to allow the bones to be reburied by the Indian tribe people associated with the land. No matter how well intentioned this act was it was deeply frustrating to me. The Arikara and Sioux had long been enemies. To give the remnants of the Woodlands-period Arikara to the Sioux ignored the history and differences of the various Indian groups of South Dakota. This decision instilled in me a desire to get the complete history of America “right” while battling false stereotypes.

Trail Histories and Guidebooks

The use of literary sources to help plan the field research was essential. Some of the sites along the auto tour advertise heavily, others were hidden treasures sometimes with a single sign to guide a traveler and sometimes not. I remembered an old saying from ROTC while I attempted to create a list of interpretation sites. My sergeant taught me no outside area could be considered “clear.” He told us that there is always an unknown variable he could not anticipate. I realized this training applied to my thesis; I used guidebooks and other tourist literature to create an in-depth list of sites along the Great Plains section of the auto tour but by no means could be assured that this is a complete list of all Oregon Trail sites in the study area.

Gregory M. Franzwa’s *The Oregon Trail Revisited* (1997) and *Maps of the Oregon Trail* (1990) do an excellent job at describing sites along the trail. *Historic Sites Along the Oregon Trail* (1994) by Aubrey Haines is an excellent guidebook with mapped locations and detailed directions. William E. Hill in *Oregon Trail: Yesterday and Today* (1987) discusses the history of certain sites. The National Parks Service’s *National Historic Trails Auto Tour Route Guide: Western Missouri through Northeastern Kansas* and *National Historic Trails Auto Tour Route Guide: Nebraska and Eastern Colorado* are easy-to-use, detailed guides on how to reach sites considered important along the auto tour.

Also valuable are books that take a historical or cultural geography perspective. These books did not aid so much in the selection of sites but with my understanding of some representations along the Oregon Trail. George Cantor’s *North American Indian Landmarks: A Traveler’s Guide* (1993) lists locations that have been places where the course of local Indian history has been altered. The book assesses the uniqueness of each spot, describing its background and present condition. Another valuable aid was *Kansas Murals: A Traveler’s Guide* (2006). The book lacked some of the lesser known murals but did have information on the more well known ones with descriptions of the mural image and origin.

Observation

The primary field method employed in the thesis is observation. In the summer of 2006, I completed a multiple-day trek from Independence, Missouri to Fort Laramie National Historic Site in Wyoming along with independent trips to unique sites. Traveling the auto tour in one journey has several benefits. First, it helps reinforce the tourist perspective. Secondly, traveling

the whole section at once allows me to interpret spatial clusters and patterning. Several places like the greater Saint Marys, Kansas area, northern Kansas along US-77, and western Nebraska have large groups of Oregon Trail sites near each other. Other places like the eastern-half of Nebraska are almost completely barren of Oregon Trail history.

There is a drawback, however, to traveling the auto tour all at once. Some important sites are closed during any particular time. However, independent trips to sites compensate for this. The main advantage of going to sites one at a time is that I can dedicate enough time to fully digest all the representations at the locale.

Site Literature

Works dealing with depictions on the landscape by such prominent geographers as David Harvey (1979) and J.B. Jackson (1970) only concern themselves with the feature itself. These studies do not consider literature, such as pamphlets and booklets, that are given or sold at the locations. This form of media gives supplemental knowledge about the monument. These pieces of literature have a benefit that other displays lack. Since tourists take site literature with them, the portable tracts can influence others who have not traveled along the trail. The leaflets do this by sometimes having a picture of the representation along with descriptive text.

Site literature also helps with my interpretation and categorization. The literature is laden with history of the Oregon Trail and information concerning the site itself. Sometimes along the trail it was confusing to decide what exactly was being conveyed. Fortunately, the pieces of site literature described in detail exactly what was being depicted and the reasoning behind the creation of the representation. For example, the site literature handed out in the guest registry box at Westar's Oregon Trail Nature Park near Saint Marys, Kansas tells what each mural is supposed to depict in detail, such as a Kaw buffalo hunt. Most importantly, the pamphlet mentions that the artist was a member of the Onaga nation. The information from the leaflet alone explicitly tells what is being shown and gives an insider's point-of-view because I could understand the artist's perspective. By obtaining an insider's point-of-view at certain sites it becomes clearer why Indians are portrayed in a certain manner.

Conversations

My research methods do not include formal interviews. This is done to keep the tourist perspective alive. I followed the recommendations for outsiders in “Field Methods for Investigating Sense of Place” (de Wit 2003).

Informal conversations occurred during several of my travels along the Oregon National Historic Trail Auto Tour between the summer of 2006 and summer of 2007. The conversations were completely unstructured and I only communicated with people who are employed by museums, volunteer at museums, or work in public relations. I began each conversation identifying myself as a person interested in the geography and history of the Oregon Trail. I found that many people who work in the tourist business are sociable and eager to answer questions. Following the directions of de Wit, the conversation was organic and ran its own course. All the people I talked to were very enthusiastic to tell me more about the depiction, other representations, and even other locations along the Oregon Trail. At the start of my field research I did not take notes when conversing with people; notes were taken when they left and I was alone. The hope was that the lack of a notebook in sight would put them more at ease and therefore allow them to speak more freely. This changed quickly, however, when one conversationalist was so eager to give me information he demanded I “take this down” and gave me a pad to take notes. Another person was impressed enough in my interests that she allowed me full access to the museum’s library. After these events I decided to keep the note pad on me at all times and politely ask if I might write down the information I was being told.

Terminology

While working on this thesis I repeatedly encountered a problem that many geographers and others face. The issue is what to call the race of people who were present on North America before the arrival of Europeans. Some use the term coined by Christopher Columbus and refer to the race collectively as “Indians.” That term is modified by others to “American Indians” in order to avoid confusion with Indians from the Asian subcontinent. Presently, many in the United States use the term “Native American” and Canadians say “First Peoples.”

For this thesis the term “Indian” is used to refer to the collective race in general. This term, while not the most politically correct, is still well known to all. More importantly, this term is used by groups which are represented along the Oregon Trail. In Rossville, the Citizen

Potawatomi Nation displays its constitution that refers to them as Indians. Other groups including the Otoe-Missouria Tribe, the Pawnee Nation, and the various Sioux nations all use the term Indian. While “Indian” is used to refer to the race in general, I make a concerted effort to address every group as their own nation or tribe. The nations and tribes along the Oregon Trail are incredibly diverse with different cultural and historical backgrounds. Only by being as specific as possible with what groups are being depicted can I accurately judge the representations.

Organization

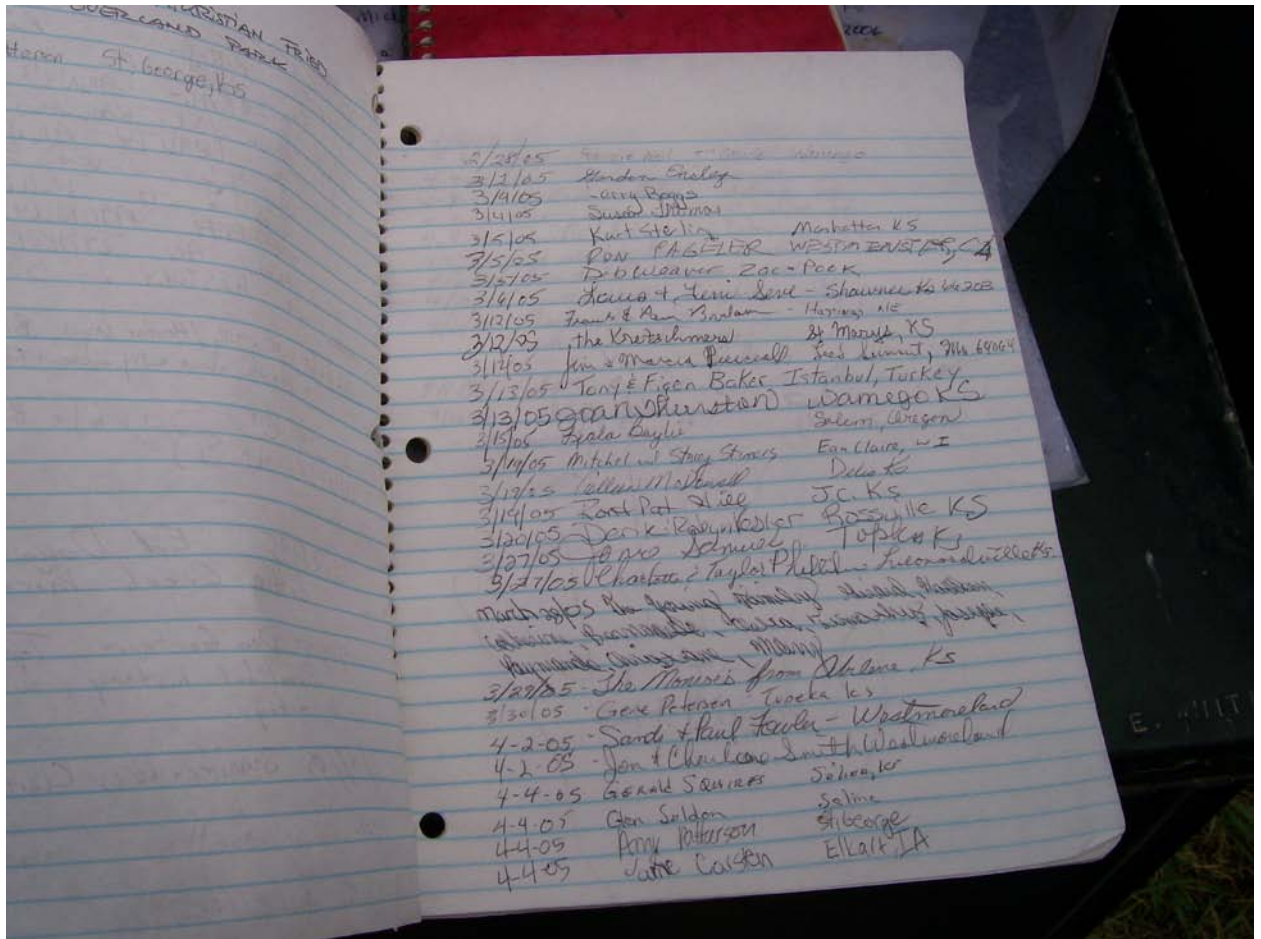
This thesis contains six chapters. Chapter Two anchors my investigation of Great Plains Indians along the Oregon Trail to other works in cultural geography. That chapter explains the relationship of the study to other studies of cultural landscapes, monuments and memorials, and Indians. Chapters three, four, and five present my results, divided into the three major thematic categories. Each chapter contains a list of the sites in the category, historical background on each location, and a description of the depiction of Indians. The final chapter is the summary of the results with conclusions and ways that the research can be expanded in the future.

CHAPTER 2 - “Jumping In:” Tying the Thesis Into Other Geographical Works

Why This Study Matters

This thesis employs perspectives of cultural geography relating to ordinary landscapes, monuments and memorials, and cultural geography research methods, including conversations and observation. The significance of this thesis is found in its value of exploring how people remember the past through the landscape. How the trail is represented in media and on the landscape affects how it is remembered and interpreted by both Americans and foreigners. During my field research I noticed that many names in the guest registry books at interpretative sites listed people from foreign countries (Figure 2.2). Getting portrayals of Indians “right” is called for if we want our national epic to be accurate. Without accuracy the lessons we learn from the past are flawed, and we are condemned to repeat it.

Figure 2.1: Registry at Vienux Family Graves shows an international collection of visitors. Photo by author (March 2006).



This study also relates closely to the theme of inclusion in American society. During the days of the Oregon Trail Indians were not considered American citizens. They were on the sidelines of political influence yet felt the full brunt of political decisions concerning the frontier of the United States. But today as American citizens, Indians are entitled to be portrayed accurately along the Oregon Trail, for the Indians played a major role in this American epic, which is now their epic as well.

Studying Landscape

The tight bond between people and their landscape often results in a spiritual as well as practical value of the land. Besides just living on the landscape humans also experience it. Robert B. Riley (1997) writes about the different levels of experience in *The Visible, the Visual*,

and the Vicarious: Questions about Vision, Landscape, and Experience. These categories describe the human-landscape relationship and provide a starting point for ordinary landscape studies. Riley's first category is visible, involving perception and cognition (Riley 1997, 203). Visible is what we see on the landscape. Not much thinking is required to view things in the visible realm. A simple roadside sign is a common thing, usually viewed only visually. Things are taken at face value in this perspective. This spectrum is the most basic and the one used most often by people (Lewis 1979, 11).

Moving past the visible view is the visual. Visual delves into "affect, evaluation, and meaning" (Riley 1997, 203). The visual perspective is a reaction to the landscape. Emotional responses are the most common way people express the experience with the visual perspective. Designers and architects consider the visual when constructing buildings, monuments, or other things on the landscape. Visual is especially important with memorials on the landscape. Besides the visible aspects of simple textual information, memorial designers wish to have a visual element which can emotionally impress its message onto people.

The final third level of landscape experience is the vicarious. The vicarious is "an internally experienced landscape that is far richer and more personal than the 'real' landscape" (Riley 1997, 207). The vicarious is how people themselves feel the landscape. It is a landscape of myth. If one were to have a vicarious interpretation of all the sites along the Oregon Trail, one might probably imagine rugged individuals seeking a new beginning while traveling across a territory unknown to them. This experience would be formed not only by the impressions of the roadside interpretations but also the media recreations of trail life passed down from generation to generation.

The three main ways of viewing the landscape are incredibly diverse. Although Riley focuses more on the emotions of cultural landscape study, Peirce Lewis (1979) in "Axioms for Reading the Landscape," focuses on what one can learn from the landscape. Lewis believes that the landscape holds certain truths. He considers that there are seven primary truths when studying the landscape. Not all of these points have relevance to this thesis, but some explored below are useful when studying depictions of Plains Indians along the Oregon Trail.

The first axiom is that landscape was a "clue to culture" (Lewis 1979, 15). Lewis believes that the landscape has been so modified by man that it is bound to have interpretable imprints from the dominating culture. Roads, houses, and monuments are all products of culture

and provide clues into what the particular culture values. If, for example, there are many monuments on the landscape to war veterans then it is clear that the dominant culture greatly values those who it considers war heroes and believes the soldierly efforts were well worth the cost.

This axiom is broken down into corollaries. The first corollary, cultural change, plays a role in this thesis. Change on the landscape in this corollary is a reflection of change in the culture. Lewis writes “if there is really major change in the *look* of the cultural landscape, then there is very likely a major change” in the culture (Lewis 1979, 15). Authors like James Loewen (2000) have pushed for revision in many historical markers across the country. The allegation is that the markers only present one, sometimes inaccurate, view of history. The second corollary adds a spatial element to the first axiom. This regional corollary states that if one part of the country’s human landscape is substantially unique from another part of the country’s human landscape, then the two different regions most likely have a different culture (Lewis 1979, 15). Along the trail the various Indian tribes had their own cultural landscape. One of the things examined in this thesis is whether or not the interpretations and representations of Indians recognize this or if they are all depicted as the same.

The second axiom is also important to this study. Calling it the axiom of cultural unity and landscape equality, Lewis states nearly all items on the human landscape reflect culture one way or another and most of the things on the landscape have equal importance (Lewis 1979, 18). This axiom reminds me to observe everything dealing with Indians along the auto tour because all representations will influence a tourist. I consider depictions not only in museum displays or in monuments but also on store signs or even the names of streets. This axiom does come with a warning: sometimes a cigar is a cigar. However, all Indian depictions along the auto route are pertinent to this study because all the sites could influence someone’s thoughts of Indians.

For the fifth axiom Lewis writes “elements of a cultural landscape make little cultural sense if they are studied outside their geographic context” (Lewis 1979, 24). This reinforces place in the study of cultural landscapes. At some places in the Great Plains the common, stereotypical view of the Lakota Sioux-style Indian hunting buffalo would be partially accurate while other at other locations in America this representation would be geographically, culturally, and historically wrong. The various nations at the start of the Oregon Trail were remarkably different than the Sioux and Cheyenne Indians who lived around the Fort Laramie area.

Although studying what is on the landscape is critical to cultural landscape studies, it is also critical to notice what is not on the landscape, because that can show what a culture has chosen to gloss over, forget, or devalue. The lack of representations of Indians along the Oregon National Historic Trail Auto Tour will be taken into account in the results chapter of “No One is Home.”

The lack of representation on the landscape also influences tourists and others. Geographer Dydia DeLyser (2001) noticed tourists’ unique interpretations of lack of representation on the landscape while volunteering at Bodie State Historic Park in California. At the state historic park the ghost town was kept in a state of arrested decay, which prevented any further loss of buildings but prohibits restoration. The lack of objects and interpretation in Bodie led tourists to assume all sorts of ideas, many of them inaccurate. At a ruined bar one person narrated his own imaginative history that dictated what went on at the spot. This version of history included the bar (which was present), additional seats at the bar (which were not present), and left out a waiting staff (who were overlooked in the brochures). The only smell, that of sagebrush, gives people the idea that Bodie was a clean, quiet, rural place out in the middle of the Desert West. Bodie, however, was an urban center full of noise and smelled like trash. Tourists also use the absence of interpretation to modify Bodie to fit their idea of the mythic west. Flags marking underground cables were taken to be the locations of those gunned down during the days of the Wild West.

Imagination plays a central role in understanding landscape representations. All the different types of depictions contribute to an imaginative epic of the Oregon Trail full of imaginative Indians, emigrants, and others along an imaginative trail in an imaginative land.

Monuments

At the epicenter of this study is the primary means of depicting and representing past events and people: the monuments. For the purpose of this thesis I have created an inclusive definition for “monument.” My working definition for monument is “anything on the landscape which marks something the culture considers important.” This definition allows for anything which commemorates, mourns, or simply marks a past action by any means, ranging from simple text to a complex artistic depiction. This definition also allows me to consider Indian depictions anywhere on the landscape, including those in museums or at commercial stores.

Monuments serve multiple purposes for a society. While most monuments seem to only describe past events or people, to paraphrase Aristotle, monuments are political animals. A primary purpose for monuments is to naturalize culturally held beliefs (Young 1992, 270). Monuments accomplish this by becoming part of the landscape (Young 1992, 270). By joining the landscape, the monument becomes natural in people's eyes and its existence, and message, naturally correct. In this way the monument becomes sort of a national rite to justify the past or a present course of action (Johnson, 1994, 78). The usual desire of these secular national rites is to create a collective identity and culture.

An insurgency can also use monuments as a tool for uniting resistance. Forbidden icons like crosses and make-shift memorials to political martyrs appeared across the Hungarian landscape as pieces of resistance to the falling Communist government in the late 1980s (Foote et al. 2000, 302).

Monuments also aid in the construction or reconstruction of history (Johnson 1994, 28). History is the way previous events are remembered and interpreted, while the past is the actual events themselves. The occurrences of the past are easily susceptible to being spun by any culture that seeks to justify its beliefs with history. Monuments allow a particular historical interpretation to be concretized and thus become an official history (Young 1994, 2). They are useful because their location on the landscape makes them much more accessible than textbooks (Loewen 2000, 15).

Monuments are not static tools on the landscape, however. They are focus points of political controversy. David Harvey (1979) wrote one of the first geographical monument studies in his groundbreaking "*Monument and Myth*" article for the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. Le Basilica du Sacre-Coeur in Paris was the key subject in the article, and in this political controversy, location and message matter immensely because this basilica was constructed by Catholics to symbolize an united, repentant France. The church is located on Montmartre, where two nationalist generals and, later, several Paris Commune supporters were executed. The basilica's message of regret of the republican reforms upset many leftists who felt it insulted the memory of those who worked for the Commune. For a short time in the late 1800s there was a move to have a replica of the Statue of Liberty also built on Montmartre to serve as a counter to the basilica. Opposition to the place and message of the basilica continued into the

late twentieth-century. Protestors squatted in the basilica and called on others to join them in the occupation of a church they felt was solely built to erase the memory of the Commune.

The message of the monument and who it is for may also be controversial. The Catholic Church constructed a giant cross which overlooked the entire Auschwitz death camp (Charlesworth 1994, 585). While the official reason for the cross was to commemorate Catholics like Father Kolbe who were murdered at Auschwitz, Andrew Charlesworth and others (Charlesworth 1994) argued the cross was part of an effort to remove the Jewish presence from Auschwitz.

Clearly, interpretations are subject to change over time. Cultural attitudes will change over time and as such so will the interpretation at sites (Foote 2003, 27; Loewen 2000).

Styles of Memorialization

There are many ways to memorialize on the landscape. Kenneth Foote (2003) describes in detail the four main ways something is marked on the landscape in *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy*. The first style is sanctification. These sites have a form of ceremony which makes them a national, secular sacred site. Christening is critical to have a sanctified site. The effort to create and celebrate a sanctified site is part of the monument itself. These sites are considered part of the public domain and meant to be a messenger of a civil religion. The effort and monument combined reinforces the values which the culture chooses to value. Sanctified sites are separated from the rest of the landscape. Memorial parks, statues, or buildings in which the purpose has been changed to become part of the message, like Ford's Theater in Washington D.C., are just some examples of sanctified sites.

The second style of memorialization on the landscape according to Foote is designation. Designated sites are deemed important to the culture but are not sanctified. These sites lack a heroic figure or extraordinary event which makes sanctified sites so unique. Like sanctified sites, designated sites tell of past happenings but are less likely to extol virtues of the past. Also, unlike sanctified sites, designated places are still part of the ordinary landscape. Typical examples of designated sites include roadside signs and plaques on side of buildings.

Both sanctification and designation create something on the landscape. Foote's next two categories feature inaction or negative action. The third style is rectification. Rectification is when a site is put back to its previous use. With rectification there is no marker to tell of past

events. The place is simply absorbed into the landscape with nothing to identify it. Rectification is the most common fate for sites of tragedy.

The fourth and final style of memorialization is obliteration. Obliteration is the opposite of sanctification. An intense, group effort is made to destroy a site because it represents the antithesis of what a culture values. Obliterated sites are marked on the landscape as noticeable gaps without official interpretation. When a culture chooses to forget an event by obliterating the site, it ironically keeps the memory alive on the landscape by doing such a rash and noticeable action.

All four styles of memorialization for monuments are taken into account in this thesis. I study not only sanctified and designated sites, but also examine places that have been rectified or obliterated. These two categories lack depictions of Indians yet nevertheless influence people's perception on the role Indians played along the Oregon Trail.

Memorialization of Indians on the Landscape

The memorialization and representation of Indians on the landscape has little consistency (Foote 2003). As documented in *Shadowed Ground*, problems arise because of historical and cultural issues involved with Indian sites. This is especially heightened concerning battle sites from the Indian Wars. The major issue is who is the intended audience of the monument. Many Indian War sites that are memorialized and interpreted celebrate the conflict as victories for the United States government and combine interpretation with the myth of the wholesome pioneer movement (Foote 2003). This constitutes a problem, however: Americans tend to be uncomfortable with naked aggression, thus many of the monuments make the violence heroic and positive (Foote 2003).

There is a changing trend with Indian battle sites (Foote 2003). Sites are being reexamined and recast in different lights. A prime example is the renaming of Custer Battlefield National Monument to Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. The renaming of the site showed a great change in memorialization. The renaming took into account the Indian perspective of the battle. By doing this the monument became part of the Indian landscape and no longer part of a constructed historic military landscape.

Beyond questioning whose perspective is taken into account, there has been a history of racism with monuments and Indians. James Loewen dubbed this racism the "hieratic scale in

historic monuments” (Loewen 2000, 43). The vast majority of racist monuments continue a “landscape of white supremacy” (Loewen 2000, 16). Whites, whether Spanish, French, English, or American, appear higher on the monument while the Indians usually look up in a sort of awe. Another way the scale is applied to Indians is their location in terms of point-of-interest and perspective. Many times Indians will be on the sidelines looking in awe at whites who are the center of attention. The hieratic scale exists along the Oregon Trail and informs my analysis of monuments.

A seminal work for this thesis is Kevin Blake’s (2004) “Great Plains Native American Representations Along the Lewis and Clark Trail.” Blake traveled across the Great Plains section of the Lewis and Clark National Historic trail documenting the different ways Indians are depicted. The various ways Indians are depicted on the landscape were filed into four themes: Councils of Power, Hostile Encounters, Good Neighbors, and Sacagawea Reinterpreted. Interpretive sites exhibiting each theme share traits that reflect ideas and stereotypes about Lewis and Clark’s interactions with the various Great Plains Indian tribes.

Councils of Power interpretations reflect the initial councils the expedition held with the eastern and central Plains Indians. Depictions of Indians in this category typically feature the various tribes willing acceptance of the American government’s dominance and rarely portray the various nations as equals compared to Lewis and Clark.

Hostile Encounters sites deal with the first tense meetings of the expedition with the Teton Sioux of present-day South Dakota and continued on to the Blackfoot nation of Montana. These interpretations attribute the inception of hostilities to the Indians and ignore the reasons behind the risk of violence. Oral histories of the Indian point-of-view, especially dealing with the Blackfeet encounter, are ignored at the various sites.

The Good Neighbors sites are based upon the friendly encounters with the Mandan and other tribes that gave the necessary supplies and friendship the expedition needed in order to succeed. Most of the Good Neighbors sites, however, portray the various Indian cultures from purely an outside perspective and the Indian perspective is lacking at these sites. The random collection of trinkets and Indian architecture at Good Neighbors sites makes the native nations more of a curiosity than a unique collection of cultures.

The last theme, Sacagawea Reinterpreted, focuses on the many ways Sacagawea has been interpreted along the trail. Sacagawea has long been a figure on the landscape exploited for

political objectives. The earliest interpretations of her portray a guide serving as a mere facilitator of American western expansion. Another early representation features her as a caring mother thus promoting family values. Modern interpretations show Sacagawea as an interpreter ensuring the various tribes of Lewis and Clark's good intentions and obtaining much needed supplies. Other modern interpretations give the impression of Sacagawea as a strong woman who idealizes the beliefs of the women's movement. This thesis adopts Blake's organizing framework of categorizing sites into different themes, and many of his fieldwork methods are emulated.

CHAPTER 3 - “No One Is Home” Erasing or Sideline Indians from the Landscape

Explaining the Myth of “No One is Home”

The epic portrayal of the Oregon Trail focuses on the approximately 300,000 pioneers who traveled along the route to the American West. The majority of media, whether in the form of literature, movies, or landscape monuments, focus on the emigrants. This primary focus is not completely erroneous; the Oregon Trail’s whole purpose was to be a path of travel for emigrants.

What is a problem; however, is the gross minimization of the role Indians played along the Oregon Trail. This farce is spread by depictions in media which completely ignore or significantly sideline Indians and their influence along the Oregon Trail. Murals that depict pioneers usually have the Indians, if there are even any Indians represented, on the sides merely watching, retreating, hunting, or being passive objects that are no different from the rest of the landscape (Jost and Lowenstein 2006, 8). Elsewhere, especially along the Oregon Trail, there are monuments that show the emigrant’s impacts on the land as the only human effects on an otherwise virgin landscape.

The idea of “No One is Home” can be first traced to Manifest Destiny and the drive to claim a so-called unclaimed land. It is cited by the emigrants themselves. Overlander Mary Ann Boatman writes that the jumping-off sites are the end of civilization (Tate 2006, 23). The myth is presently propagated even by the National Park Service. In the auto tour guide concerning Missouri and Kansas, there is a section entitled “On Their Own” and it ends with the sentence, “From there until they reached trail’s end some 2,000 miles later, the pioneer emigrants were on their own” (National Park Service 2005, 3). Even the National Geographic Society produces material that advances the myth. The 2000 map, “Western Migration: Dreams of Gold and a Better Life Drive Mass Movement,” has no Indian presence on the land. Though military forts, American settlements, and physical features are represented on the map, it is as if the Indians never existed.

Sites that fit into No One is Home myth ignore the contribution Indians played in the nature of the trail and the Indian influence on the emigrants. River crossings and guiding, humanitarian aide, and trade were the primary ways Indians impacted the Oregon Trail. There are many recorded instances of Indians requesting a small payment in exchange for helping with river crossings (Franzwa 1997, 43). Kaw Indians operated a ferry service in present-day Topeka that transported pioneers for a fee (Tate 2006, 27). Elsewhere, some enterprising Indians competed against each other over who could help the emigrants more. Two dueling toll bridges spanned across the Little Vermillion River (Tate 2006, 98). Indians also served as local guides. These guides typically knew the route much better than the guidebooks; some guidebooks were written by people who never traveled along the trail (Franzwa 1997, 21). Jesuit missionary Father Pierre-Jean DeSmet frequently traveled along the Oregon Trail with his Indian companions (Franzwa 1997, 43). Even the Donner Party used Indian guides several times in their journey, including the Kaw Indians in present-day Kansas (Tate 2006, 28). The guidebook writer J.M. Sherley recommended Indian guides because of their trail knowledge (Tate 2006, 12).

Humanitarian aid from the Indians saved the lives of countless emigrants. One heroic moment by Indians occurred in 1843. Kaw Indians saved the daughters of one emigrant from drowning in the Kansas River and refused payment for the rescue (Tate 2006, 79). Another time a group of Lakota Indians took care of a widow and children who were separated from the wagon train; the family was reunited with their group only with the help of the Lakotas (Tate 2006, xiii). A wagon train was twice rescued by Lakota near Ash Hollow during the particular bad winter of 1856. The wagon train members were allowed to live with the Lakota for five weeks until conditions improved (Tate 2006, 78).

The major interaction between the emigrants and Indians was trade. Trade played a daily role in Great Plains Indian tribes and the increase of new, exotic goods only increased the importance of trade to the various nations (Tate 2006, 105). Trade with the emigrants was of such importance that tribes like the Pawnee invented rules of engagement such as waving a white flag in order to establish good relations at the start of trading negotiations (Tate 2006, 47). Sometimes trade relations were on especially good terms. Several times during his 1845 journey Francis Parkman was able to visit villages and feast with Indians as well as trade. Other emigrants also were able to make short side trips to visit Indian villages to trade.

The No One is Home myth’s biggest flaw, however, is its racist ignorance of Indians themselves. It is estimated that Paleoindians have been present in the Great Plains since 13,500 years ago. Sioux, Pawnee, Kaw, and other nations live in lands which the trail ran through. Various other tribes such as the Delaware, Miamis, and Wyandottes were moved by the government between 1829 and 1843 into lands the Oregon Trail cut across (Morgan 1959, 14). The original thought was to establish an area where Indians could be dumped into and perhaps even create an Indian state (Tate 2006, 14). The Great Plains of modern-day Nebraska and Kansas were chosen as Indian Territory because the land was thought to be a “vast worthless area” (Tate 2006, 14).

Table 3.1: Significant No One is Home Sites

Site	Location
Jackson County Courthouse Square	Independence, Missouri
New Santa Fe Cemetery	Kansas City, Missouri
Kansas Museum of History	Topeka, Kansas
Herbert Reinhard Green Memorial Wildlife Park	Willard, Kansas
Oregon Trail Nature Park	Belvue, Kansas
Blue Rapids Mural	Blue Rapids, Kansas
Alcove Springs	Marysville, Kansas
Marysville Mural	Mayrsville, Kansas
Fort Kearny State Historical Park	Kearney, Nebraska
100 th Meridian Museum	Cozad, Nebraska
Ash Hollow State Historical Park	Lewellen, Nebraska
Robidoux Pass	Gering, Nebraska
Fort Laramie National Historic Site	Fort Laramie, Wyoming

No One is Home at the Sites

Method

Table 3.1 documents the sites in the study area which have interpretations that fit into the myth of No One is Home. For this section I describe the site's history, its importance to the Oregon Trail, and how the interpretation fits into the No One is Home theme. Sites are examined either individually or in a group. If two or more sites that fit into the No One is Home theme are located near each, these sites are considered as a group.

Independence and Kansas City, Missouri

Independence, Missouri prides itself as the start of the Oregon Trail. The markers on the landscape making the claim seem to be everywhere. Tourist trinkets like coffee mugs advertise the city as the "Queen City of the Trails." The official visitor's guide declares Independence "the beginning of the Santa Fe, Oregon and California Trails" (City of Independence 2006, 1).

Its reputation as a genesis point for trails is certainly deserved. Independence served as the Santa Fe Trail's eastern end for the latter half of its existence (Franzwa 1997, 76). Independence was the preferred jump-off point during the early days of the Oregon Trail, with wagon parties such as the 1842 Hastings Party and 1843 Jesse Applegate party leaving for the West from Independence (Franzwa 1997, 21). During most of the 1840s it served as the common rendezvous for pioneers heading off on the trail (Parkman 1982, 39). From the late 1840s on, Independence's importance was replaced by other cities like St. Joseph, Missouri (Franzwa 1997, 52) and Westport, Missouri (Franzwa 1997,82), however, the reputation of Independence as an important place in the geography of the Oregon Trail was assured.

The main historical site in Independence is the Jackson County Courthouse Square. The Square is the start of the Oregon National Historic Trail (National Park Service 2005, 12). Emigrants would meet up in the courthouse square to form wagon trains and buy any last minute supplies. The courthouse itself is now owned by the Jackson County Historical Society and is part museum and part historical archive. The immediate area is mostly tourist shops and restaurants that appeal to those interested in the various overland trails and in President Harry S. Truman, who grew up in Independence.

Figure 3.1: Monument on the Courthouse Square. Photo by author (July 2006).



Various monuments are located either in the square or close by. These monuments deal with the history of Independence itself from the time of establishment by American settlers in the early nineteenth century. One of these monuments specifically deals with the Oregon Trail. The monument marks the location where the Oregon Trail starts and was erected in 1948 by the county government (Fig. 3.1). The monument states the pioneers who traveled across the Oregon Trail and made their homes in the Northwest brought civilization with them. The wording implies there was not civilization in the Northwest before the Oregon Trail emigrants arrived. While these emigrants certainly brought American culture with them, there was already civilization in Oregon Territory. Nations such as the Chinooks lived for centuries in the Columbia River valley in permanent villages. These tribes farmed, fished, and traded between each other and with groups like the British Hudson Bay Company and Americans at Fort Astoria at the mouth of the Columbia River. The civilizations in the Northwest are one of the reasons the Oregon Trail exists. Methodist missionary Jason Lee was the first person to go along the trail

and his incentive was specifically to proselytize the Indians (Franzwa 1997, 15). Others such as Presbyterian Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and Catholic Pierre-Jean DeSmet soon followed in Lee's footsteps well before the trail became a heavily traveled route. All these people desired to reach the civilizations already present in the Northwest.

The streets of Independence and nearby Kansas City, Missouri overlay the path of the Oregon Trail. Brochures by the city government and private groups advertise how one can walk the Oregon Trail and see wagon ruts in Independence. The pamphlet for The Bingham Waggoner Estate, now a private museum, takes pride in how "hundreds of thousands" traveled West on the nearby trails. Nowhere, though, does anything on the landscape or in site literature tell of the prehistoric origin of the roads in Independence, the forerunners of what would become of the Oregon Trail. The roads of the greater Kansas City area overlay early Osage paths and pre-Osage paths dating back over 2,000 years (Baumgardner 2006, 26). These paths are not in the Midwest American standard grid system but instead mark in the easiest traveled route from specific points. The paths are far reaching. One path ran from present-day Columbia, Missouri to Council Grove, Kansas (Baumgardner 2006, 29). This Osage path later became part of the Santa Fe Trail (Baumgardner 2006, 27). Using Franzwa's maps it is possible to compare the standard route of the Oregon Trail with the Osage trails around Kansas City. One of the Osage trails which later became part of the Oregon Trail is from Wayne City Landing, one of the places where people would disembark and start west towards Oregon and elsewhere (Franzwa 1997, 71), to downtown Independence (Baumgardner 2006, 26). Another overlap is from where the Jackson County Courthouse Square now stands to the parting of the Santa Fe and Oregon Trail, near present-day Gardner, Kansas (Baumgardner 26-27). But this rich infrastructural history is banished along the trail landscape.

The town New Santa Fe was incorporated in 1851, mere feet away from the Kansas-Missouri border (Franzwa 1997, 93). New Santa Fe was the last American-settled place along the trail until the opening of Indian Territory by the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 (Fanselow 1996, 29). It was a place where emigrants and teamsters could get last minute supplies. After Indian Territory was opened up to settlement by American citizens, New Santa Fe lost its importance and eventually was absorbed by Kansas City, Missouri.

Today not much is left of New Santa Fe. A little cemetery park contains the graves of those who lived in the town, a little sign by the local historical society gives a short history of the

town, and a National Park Service display from 2001 tells of nearby trail ruts. The information at the cemetery tells a story of a final outpost before wilderness, of border ruffians and pioneers all forming a triumphal image of the past. New Santa Fe's large number of saloons attracted Indians who could not buy alcohol on their lands (Franzwa 1997, 93). Many of the traders who frequently visited New Santa Fe got their goods from trading with the Indians.

Indians are missing from the site history. The alcohol element would give New Santa Fe a negative image, something the local New Santa Fe Historical Society probably does not want. Elsewhere in the Missouri section of the study area no Indian trading is mentioned. This is surprising because of how the western Missouri towns were key points of trade. Places like Independence and Westport were full of American and Plains Indian traders (Parkman 1982, 40).

All these sites show an exclusion or ignorance of American Indians. Santa Fe Trail, Oregon Trail, Mormon Trail, and Civil War history is marked on the landscape. Tourist businesses capitalize on these histories. Literature by various groups ranging from the chamber of commerce to the Community of Christ incorporates these histories into what Independence and the surrounding area means today. The Indian past of region, though, is relegated to some other realm, not part of the local identity.

Uniontown – The Now Absent Giant

The auto tour leaves Missouri and enters Kansas on Interstate 435. Lawrence, Lecompton, and Topeka feature many landscape markers related to Bleeding Kansas history. But no markers indicate one place of great significance in the historical geography of the Oregon Trail: Uniontown, Kansas.

Uniontown was established by government agents in 1848 as a service center for the Potawatomi Indians (Clark 2006, 4). It was located about fourteen miles west of present-day Topeka just south of the Kansas River. It included shops operated by Potawatomis and government agents, a church, mill, and school house (Boursaw 2006). Roads were laid out in an orderly manner and it was once thought that Uniontown might become the capital of a future Kansas state (Boursaw 2006). The primary purposes of Uniontown were to distribute government money payments to the Potawatomi as mandated by treaty and operate as a service stop for emigrants along the Oregon Trail (Clark 2006, 4). The federal government sent one-

hundred thousand dollars annually to be broken into allotments that ranged between six to ten dollars per tribe member (Clark 2006, 5).

Because there were only a few settlements in Indian Territory and its central location, Uniontown quickly became the largest city in what would become Kansas with a population above three hundred (Clark 2006, 5). Uniontown became a home to many Potawatomi who were adapting to the dominant American culture. Dr. John Snyder, a traveler along the Oregon Trail, described how there were approximately fifty log houses full of Potawatomi (Hoobler 1993, 72). Snyder wrote of a lively place and complimented the progress by both the government and the tribe (Hoobler 1993, 72).

Tragedy struck Uniontown early on with such a force that the town would never be the same. The spring of 1849 saw a cholera outbreak which hit Uniontown and the nearby area hard (Clark 2006, 4). Hundreds of Potawatomi died along with government agents and emigrants passing through on their way to Oregon or California (Clark 2006, 4). Many of the white victims were buried in individual graves while the most of the Potawatomi were placed in a mass grave (Boursaw 2006). The outbreak was so severe that the government ordered Uniontown burnt and only rebuilt after the infection was over (Clark 2006, 4). Uniontown never fully recovered from the epidemic and was practically abandoned in 1855 (Clark 2006, 4).

Today not much is left of Uniontown. In a privately owned cornfield, found only with the help of local residents, the graves of the cholera victims remain. (I am grateful to Mr. Boursaw for his knowledge of the area detailed directions to the graves.) Some headstones mark the government agents who died. The Bourassa family, a powerful clan whose members included both full blooded Potawatomi and Métis, has a private plot which the family itself paid for after the outbreak (Boursaw 2006). The graves of the Potawatomi victims, however, are marked by a pile of stones against a fence.

Remembrance of Uniontown is close to non-existent in Oregon Trail literature. The three big modern-day traveling guides -- *The Oregon Trail Revisited*, *The Oregon Trail: Yesterday and Today*, and *Traveling the Oregon Trail* -- never mention Uniontown. The National Park Service's official auto tour guide has Uniontown listed with the Herbert Reinhard Green Memorial Wildlife Park. The wildlife park lies north of the Kansas River and about five miles away from the site of Uniontown and is maintained by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. The park has preserved traces of the Oregon Trail and pioneer graves but makes no

mention the Potawatomi, Uniontown, or its importance to Kansas and Oregon Trail history. It is described merely as an “Oregon Trail village from 1848-1859” (National Park Service 2005, 18). The interpretation makes it seem that Uniontown’s sole purpose was to serve Oregon Trail emigrants, and the guide ignores the memory of the Potawatomis.

Figure 3.2: Traces of the Oregon Trail are marked at Herbert Reinhard Green Memorial Wildlife Park but no mention is made of Uniontown. Photo by author (July 2006).



Oregon Trail Nature Park – Pioneers Alone in a Virgin Paradise

Oregon Trail Nature Park is along U.S. 24 between Saint Marys and Belvue, Kansas. According to signs in the park, it has been operated by Westar Energy since the 1990s. The main attraction of the park is a silo with three large murals. Two of the three murals are perfect examples of No One is Home. The first mural, “Oregon Bound,” shows a pioneer family traveling alone along the Oregon Trail. The next mural is entitled “Kansas Wildlife.” Here

several species of animals intermingle in a very similar green and forested land. No Indians appear in these two murals. The third mural does have Indians but its landscape is a brown, barren, and harsh. The green and good parts of Kansas are lands of plenty where Americans can pass through while keeping the land virgin green. The Oregon Trail Nature Park itself is designed as sort of an example of this with mown lawns, walking paths, and a picnic shelter. However, the place where Indians roam is harsh and, more importantly, elsewhere.

Figure 3.3: Located in the Oregon Trail Nature Park, no Indians are portrayed on this mural. Photo by author (July 2006).



An overlook at the park provides an interpretive sign featuring the park logo: a lone wagon train going along a well-defined path with green lands and animals along the sides. Just as in “Oregon Bound” the land is presented as a perfect balance between emigrants and nature. No Indians are seen.

Alcove Springs and the Nearby Murals – Not the Indians’ Home

The last major complex of sites in Kansas focuses on Alcove Springs. Alcove Springs is one of the most celebrated locations along the Oregon Trail (Fanselow 1996, 39). During the time of the trail it was a popular stop with wildflowers, tall grass, and of course, the cool, clean water from the spring itself (Fanselow 1996, 40). It became a sort of mini-vacation while the emigrants waited for the nearby Blue River to recede from one of its frequent spring floods (Fanselow 1996, 40). This area offered something else of great importance to the travelers: lumber. 1846 emigrant Edwin Bryant wrote of the large quantity of oak, cottonwood, walnut, beech, and sycamore trees not found elsewhere on the plains (Franzwa 1997, 152). Edwin Bryant’s wagon train went on to infamy, ensuring his observations of Alcove Springs would be well remembered. While the party was camping and waiting for the river to recede, Sarah “Grandma” Keyes passed away and was buried near the springs (Franzwa 1997, 154). Keyes was the first member of the Donner Party to die.

Alcove Springs received its name from Donner Party member Byron McKinstry (Franzwa 1997, 152). From all the interpretations of Alcove Springs and the nearby area on the landscape it is easy to believe that is when the local history started. The two National Park Service illustrated signs make no mention of anything happening before the Donner Party’s visit. Other local sites extend the myth. In Blue Rapids there are three murals interpreting the local area’s history. The murals were ordered by the town in the early 1990s to commemorate the town’s history (Jost and Lowenstein 2006, 22). Two of these murals depict the Oregon Trail. One mural, Arrival at Alcove, shows a pioneer wagon train passing by the spring as some members go down a path to gather flowers and obtain fresh water. The only date given is in the nearby caption which mentions the “ill-fated Donner-Reed party” of 1846.

The other mural depicts Indians, but its representation is still one of the No One is Home theme. This mural, with no name or description, focuses on emigrants traveling in covered wagons. The Indians are shown as either hunting buffalo or observing the wagon train. This is a standard representation of Indians in murals done by non-Indians (Jost and Lowenstein 2006, 8). There is an element in this mural that does more for the No One is Home myth than anything else, however. A White mother and daughter are using a metal water pump near sunflowers, a symbol of Kansas. The water pump is a sign of permanence. The message for viewers of this mural is that although there were some Indians in the area, they were merely hunter-nomads who

only prowl the sidelines, while the American settlers were the true residents of the land. The artist, Kenny Winkenwader, is a local resident, and his work justifies his town's claim to the land while ignoring competing claims (Jost and Lowenstein 2006, 22).

Figure 3.4: Mural in Blue Rapids, Kansas depicting Oregon Trail wagon train and Indians hunting buffalo and observing the emigrants. Photo by author (July 2006).



Figure 3.5: A pioneer family pumps water while nomad Indians hunt buffalo. Detail of the mural in figure 3.4. Photo by author (July 2006).



The variety of interpretations around Marysville gives the impression that the history of the area starts with the Donner Party. Indians are either ignored or relegated to the distant landscape. White pioneers are portrayed as the sole permanent inhabitants of Kansas. This ignores the Indian presence around Alcove Springs, which had been remarked upon by a number of emigrants. The Donner Party was being guided by a Kaw when they traveled in the area (Tate 2006, 28). The spring was the site of numerous temporary Indian camps and was used as resting group for Shawnee after buffalo hunting (Tate 2006, 75). Emigrant George McKinstry paid Indians at Alcove Springs to deliver his mail to Westport, Missouri (Tate 2006, 75). Northeastern Kansas was the site of many of these small encounters, all of which have been forgotten on the landscape.

Nebraska – No Indian is Home

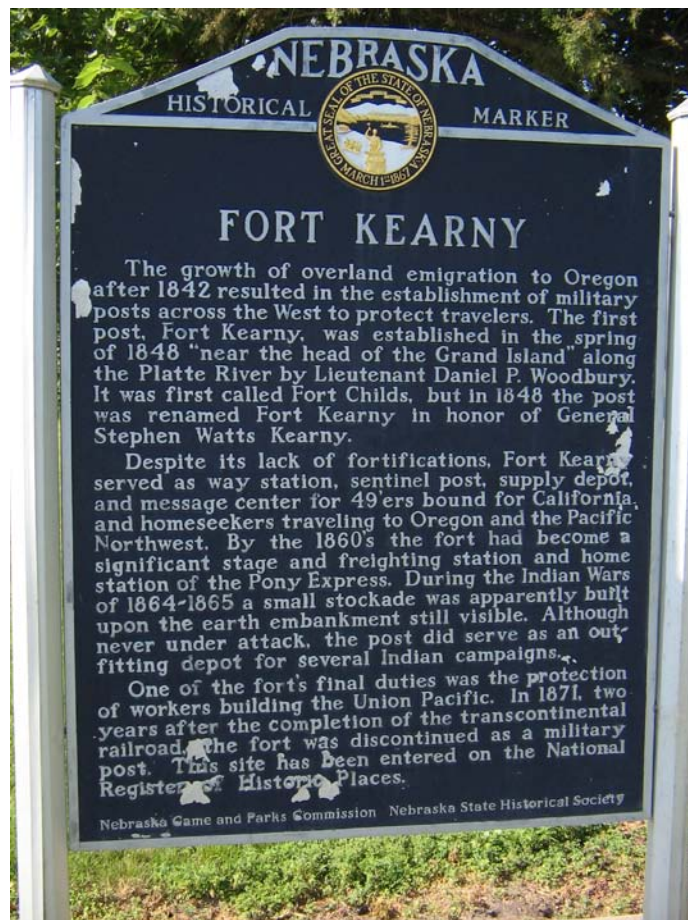
Gregory Franzwa writes that southeast Nebraska appears uninteresting to the Oregon Trail traveler (Franzwa 1990, 64). He writes this because of the lack of noticeable landmarks commemorating the Oregon Trail. Like their Kansas counterparts, the Nebraska landmarks mostly lack a portrayal of Indians. Indian portrayals concerning the Oregon Trail, or anything else for that matter, are lacking in the southeastern and central portions of the Oregon National Historic Trail Auto Tour. Western Nebraska is more mixed in the ways Indians are depicted, but No One is Home is still a significant theme.

The vast majority of towns in southeastern Nebraska were founded during the railroad booms of the 1870s and 1880s; this fact is clear in local histories dealing with the Oregon Trail and the forcible removal of the Pawnee south of the Platte River in 1854 (Tate 2006, 34). Because of this, the Oregon Trail is shown as being something in the distant past; something not fully absorbed into the town's history. The most common pictorial representation of the trail along the auto tour is a lone wagon. This appears on both the official auto tour sign and on several town welcoming signs, including one at the southern entrance to Hastings. Another common Oregon Trail interpretation on the landscape is the roadside sign. Only one roadside sign in southeastern Nebraska makes any mention of Indians within this study's timeframe of 1840-1860. *Forty-Niner Trail* outside the Thayer County Museum in Belvidere tells how the overland trek was "long and arduous, with disease, heat, lack of water, and Indian threats the constant dangers." This marker portrays Indians negatively and ignores tribal affiliations. Nothing is mentioned about the Pawnee or Otoe who call southeastern Nebraska home (National Park Service 1998, 28). Nothing is brought up about the trading encounters that occurred all along the Platte River Valley that are recorded in countless trail diaries, including that of Francis Parkman. Tribes like the Otoe are known for being traders in the past and have had friendly trading relations with governments since first contact with the Spanish (McCartney 2003, 258).

Pioneer Village in Minden also ignores Indians. A sign outside says the museum dedicates itself to "man's progress" in Nebraska. Outside is a mural depicting Indians in warbonnets hunting buffalo. Inside the museum starts off with the overland trails sans Indians and then continues to claim American settlers brought agriculture to the area. This claim is incomplete: The 1812 Astoria party noted how the Pawnee had a complex agricultural system in present-day Nebraska.

The route between Fort Kearny and Ogallala forms the central part of the Oregon Trail in Nebraska. Fort Kearny, a state historical park since 1928, dominates the landscape in the central trail portion. Displays inside Fort Kearny advertise the fort as a station for the United States military, supply stop for emigrants, and trading post for Indians. Little else is mentioned concerning the interaction with Indians. One of two displays dedicated to Indians is entitled “War with the Red Man” and is told from the perspective of the United States Army. One book promoted at the visitor center, *Overland Trail: The Epic Path of the Pioneers to Oregon*, falsely states the fort was burned to the ground during an Indian raid (Laut 1929, 81). A marker in the parking lot only mentions Indians with the phrases “Indian Wars” and “Indian Campaigns.” Nothing at the fort discusses how the Pawnee lived in the area or aided emigrants.

Figure 3.6: Roadside Nebraska Historical Marker at Fort Kearny, with Indians mentioned only in the context of war. Photo by author (July 2006).



The myth continues outside Fort Kearny. The roadside marker *Great Platte River Road* in Kearney County makes no mention of Indians at all. The Lincoln County roadside signs *Crossing the Overland Trail* and *Great Platte River Road* have statements such as “disease and Indian attacks were very real dangers” and “deep sand caught the wagon wheels and Indian attacks were always a danger.” Phelps County’s Historic Platte Valley sign is particularly stereotyped: “Indian raids by the Sioux and Cheyenne were severe in the 1860's, and several attacks occurred near here.” The Cozad 100th Meridian Museum, a privately owned museum, is dedicated to the town’s post-1880 history. While there is a brief aside to the Pony Express and the nearby station house, nothing provides significant information on Indians. The only time Indians are discussed in the guided tour is in the context of raids and army cavalry.

The treeless, shortgrass terrain of western Nebraska is the landscape commonly associated with the stereotypical Plains Indian. Surprisingly, however, Indians depictions are rare on this landscape. Two major Oregon Trail sites, Windlass Hill and Ash Hollow State Historical Park, are mere miles apart and have a rich Indian-influenced Oregon Trail history. In the early days of the Oregon Trail missionary William Gray surrendered his converted Flathead guides to a band of Brule Sioux in exchange for his own life (Franzwa 1997, 195). This area was teaming with Sioux villages (Tate 2006, 42). Emigrants would frequently trade for supplies, including moccasins, that pioneers discovered were much better traveling footwear than manufactured shoes (Tate 2006, 44). But neither Gray’s treasonous act nor the friendly trade transactions are commemorated anywhere in the vicinity.

The only Indian history memorialized in the Windlass Hill-Ash Hollow area is the Battle of Ash Hollow. Here there are several different interpretations. The visitor center’s parking lot features a roadside marker with the text “General Harney's (sic) 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.” The visitor center has a series of displays telling the same story with more background and a post-battle history. However, about two miles away on a tight turn of the auto tour there is *The Battle of Blue Water* marker which tells a different story. “Harney engaged in a delaying parley with Chief Little Thunder, the mounted troops had circled undetected to the north.” Harney engaged in deceit, according to this tucked away historical marker. *The Battle of Blue Water* sign is a prime example of trying to bury a tragic bit of history.

Two sites near the Wyoming line mark the two trading posts of the Robidoux family. The second post site features replica buildings constructed with logs from an old settlement. A marker erected by the nearby town of Gering, Nebraska claims the site was an important stop for overlanders traveling the Oregon Trail. The sign further states Antoine Robidoux, his Indian wife, and their baptized children lived at the site in the early 1850s. The monuments at Robidoux's post do a remarkable job at erasing parts of history. No information is given describing the wife's Indian nation. The markers make it seem that the trading post only served emigrants, which to be fair was its main function, but it was also involved in the Indian trade (Franzwa 1997, 212).

Another omission is that the trail from Ash Hollow to Fort Laramie was lined with Sioux camps willing to trade with emigrants (Tate 2006, 54), yet not one monument marks the Indian villages that were once there.

Fort Laramie Area – Ignoring Positives, Remembering Negatives

Fort Laramie National Historic Site contains the old military outpost of Fort Laramie, one of the most famous places along the Oregon Trail. Like other forts, it is a nexus point for Indians and Oregon Trail emigrants, but the national historic site also falls into the No One is Home theme.

Fur trader William Sublette established a trading post in 1834 named Fort William (National Park Service 1997). Sublette sent emissaries to contact local Sioux and Cheyenne to establish trade relations. The American Fur Trading Company bought the fort in 1836 and enjoyed excellent trading relations with the Sioux and Cheyenne. Trade was so prosperous that a rival company opened a trading post a mere mile away from Fort William (National Park Service 1997). The American Fur Company sold the fort to the United States Military in 1849 as part of a militarization of the Oregon Trail and the fort was renamed Fort Laramie (Hill 1987, 22). The fort played a critical role until its closing in 1890 (Fanselow 1996, 89).

Indian and emigrant relations were good for the most part during the time frame of the Oregon Trail. The fort was a resting and trading spot for Dakota Sioux Indians. Whole villages would come to the fort to interact with traders, government officials, and emigrants (Parkman 1982). It is estimated that 1,200 Sioux camped at once near Fort Laramie (Tate 2006, 44). Indians respected the power and authority of the army post. Dakota Indians sometimes

performed funeral rites in sight of the fort in hopes the army's presence would keep violators of the ceremonies, whether hostile Plains Indians or disrespectful overlanders, away (Parkman 1982, 152). Cultural exchanges also took place at Fort Laramie. Pioneer Joseph Aram wrote in his 1846 trail diary how Indians performed several songs and dances as exchange for some goods (Tate 2006, 95). Although these encounters did not alter the overall historic course of the Oregon Trail, they greatly affected the emigrants and Indians. These experiences, no matter how brief, humanized each side and allowed for greater understanding between emigrants and Indians.

Unfortunately a great tragedy occurred in Fort Laramie's past. On August 17, 1854, a lame cow took off from a Mormon expedition and wandered into a Brule Sioux camp (Franzwa 1997, 222). The Mormon owner was too afraid to enter the camp and instead headed off to Fort Laramie to ask for military assistance from Second Lieutenant John Grattan (Franzwa 1997, 222). Grattan assembled a group of thirty-one men and entered the camp demanding the cow and an alleged thief Grattan blamed for stealing the cow (Franzwa 1997, 223). The United States-appointed chief of the camp, Conquering Bear, negotiated for forty-five minutes until an impatient Grattan ordered his men to open fire with a cannon and guns (Utley 1981, 114). Conquering Bear was quickly killed. Brule and allied Oglala Sioux counterattacked and killed all but one of the infantry soldiers. The sole army survivor died days later (Utley 1981, 114). The misunderstandings and rashness on the parts of the Mormon emigrant and Second Lieutenant Grattan forever poisoned United States/Sioux relations. Embittered Brule conducted raids during the winter of 1854 and the public outcry led to Colonel William S. Harney being assigned to avenge the Grattan Massacre. In 1855, Harney would get his revenge at the Battle of Ash Hollow (Utley 1981, 115).

Just as the historical archives record more tragedy than positives, so does the landscape. The Grattan Massacre site is marked by the Grattan Massacre Historical Monument, erected in 1953. It contains a graphic of Indians killing soldiers as one officer bravely tries to fight, reminiscent of the famous painting of Custer's Last Stand. Another monument to Grattan's troops is located along the driveway to the fort's parking lot.

No One is Home monuments are also common. The majority of signs at the fort are dedicated to the army. Some places have markers discussing the overland trails. Other monuments are dedicated to army wives and teamsters. One information sign, *Fort Laramie and*

the Western Movement, prides Fort Laramie as being an “outpost of civilization” (Figure 3.7). The information center museum has displays about the history of the American West from pre-history to the modern day. The last historical mention of Indians is the Wounded Knee Massacre. It is as if the Indians ceased to exist after the massacre. No One is Home continues in the non-marking of places. Not one Indian campground is marked, although a hotel for stagecoach drivers, emigrant campgrounds, and trail ruts are. The gravesite of Mini-Aku, a Sioux who loved American culture so much that she desired to have a funeral within sight of Fort Laramie (Franzwa 1997, 231), is not memorialized in any way.

Figure 3.7: “Outpost of Civilization” in a way true but ignores the Indian cultures of the area. Photo by author (July 2006).



Parting Thoughts

No One is Home is an old theme: Indians and settlers have always been viewed as though they lived in different worlds (Tate 2006, 230). This myth is imprinted on the landscape by a variety of means, such as a lack of Indian depictions or those in which Indians are marginalized to the sidelines, and others that ignore Indian contributions or key moments of Indian history. No One is Home primarily exists because local residents value Indian history less than their settlement history. This is outdated and wrong: America is a multiracial society. Another reason No One is Home exists is because of shame. The act of William Gray is nothing to be proud of or emulate. It is hard for a culture to make a monument to its failures. The last reason No One is Home exists is racism. To compare a group of people to a disaster like disease or an accident is sickening.

CHAPTER 4 - “Siouxification” All Indians are the Same

Explaining the Myth of “Siouxification”

The Shawnee, Delaware, Sac and Fox, Potawatomi, Pawnee, Oto, and Sioux are just some of the nations that live along the Oregon Trail. Each nation consists of tribes, each of which is unique. The Mission Band of the Potawatomi operated stores, bridges, and ferries near Saint Marys, Kansas. The Brule Sioux negotiated peace with the United States government. The four tribes of the Pawnee helped the U.S. Army keep the peace along the Platte River.

While no one would claim that all European cultures are the same, many people assume that all Indians are. The stereotypes of Indians feature tepees, war bonnets with trailing feathers, ponies, and buffalo (Sturtevant 2001, 732). The stereotypical Indians usually are depicted hunting buffalo or roaming. No agriculture or anything else that would tie the Indians to a specific spot is imagined. This nomadic Indian has become the image and the embodiment of what many Americans think an Indian is (Sturtevant 2001, 732). This stereotype combines traits from several Plains Indian nations, especially the Sioux Indians. This stereotype has become the standard media depiction of Indians. I refer to this stereotyping as “Siouxification.”

Siouxification is an inaccurate representation Indians. This chapter is examines the ways in which Siouxification has infiltrated the depictions of Indians along the Oregon Trail. The theme of Siouxification theme has a special spatial nature which No One is Home or “Getting it Right” do not have. The westernmost end of the Great Plains section of the Oregon Trail is home to the Sioux and the related Cheyenne nation. Thus it is depictions of Plains Indians in the eastern end of the study area (Missouri, Kansas, and eastern Nebraska) that are inaccurate.

Siouxification demeans Indians by eradicating the traits of their nations and their ties to specific places. The nomadic nature of Siouxified Indians makes the Great Plains another land ripe for European settlement.

Table 4.1: Significant Siouxification Sites

Jackson County Courthouse Square	Independence, Missouri
Frontiers Trail Museum	Independence, Missouri
Kansas Museum of History	Topeka, Kansas
Citizen Potawatomi Community Center	Rossville, Kansas
Oregon Trail Nature Park	Belvue, Kansas
Rock Creek Station State Historical Park	Fairbury, Nebraska
Great Platte River Road Archway Monument	Kearney, Nebraska
Museum of Nebraska Art	Kearney, Nebraska
Pioneers Trails Museum	Bridgeport, Nebraska

Siouxification at the Sites

Method

Table 4.1 is a list of sites in the study area which have interpretations that fit into the Siouxification theme. For this section I describe the site's history, its importance to the Oregon Trail, and how the interpretation is an example of Siouxification.

Sites are examined either individually or in a group. Like the other chapters if two or more sites that fit into the Siouxification theme are located near each other, they are examined together.

Independence – A Bad Start

Across the street from Jackson County Courthouse Square is the first depiction of an Indian that one sees along the Oregon Trail. The depiction is a perfect example of Siouxification. Carey's Fur and Leather Company's logo features a stern looking Indian in full headdress. Inside the store is a wide variety of leather goods, some of which are labeled as "Indian." The authenticity of these objects is questionable; one pair of moccasins has a "*Hecho en Mexico*" tag. "Indian" trinkets, including dream catchers, beads, and dolls, are for sale.

Besides “Cherokee Beads” or “Mohawk Leather,” most of the supplies are stereotypes of Indians goods.

Figure 4.1: A bad omen of things to come at Carey’s Fur and Leather Company, Independence, Missouri. Photo by author (July 2006).



Siouxification also occurs in the first museum in the study area. The Frontier Trails Museum’s section on the Oregon Trail is woefully lacking in Indian representations. One display, entitled “Encountering Indians,” only discusses encounters with Plains Indians and has a caricature of a semi-hostile Indian with long hair. Paintings of the Oregon Trail that feature either teepees or Indians riding around on horses hunting are common.

Independence, Missouri is the start of the Oregon Trail. Unfortunately, it is also the start of the two myths of No One is Home and Siouxification. These two sites are listed in many travel guides. Their depictions misinform visitors about Indians along the Oregon Trail.

Kansas Museum of History – Siouxification of the Kaw

Eastern Kansas is the historic home of the Kaw, the first Indian nation to have its homeland crossed by the Oregon Trail. The first major stop in the Kaw homeland is the Kansas Museum of History, operated by the Kansas State Historical Society. The museum is located in Topeka and is a short mile detour from the auto tour. Topeka is the Kaw word for “a good place to grow potatoes” (Morgan 1959, 34).

The museum’s outside campus contains a monument which encapsulates Siouxification. The monument titled “White Buffalo,” dedicated in 1983, depicts an Indian with long hair on horseback next to a white buffalo, and staring reverently into the sky. The depiction is offensive and has nothing to do with Kansas Indian history. The White Buffalo cult revolves around the White Buffalo Woman *Pte San Win* (Pickering 1997, 16). The myth originated with the Lakota Sioux and has spread to the Cheyenne, Pawnee, and other tribes (Pickering 1997, 15-16). There is no evidence that the White Buffalo cult has infiltrated the Kaw nation or any other Kansas tribe. The Indian is obviously based on the imagery of the Sioux. Sioux warriors have long hair (Lowie 1963, 53); the Kaw and other nearby tribes have shaved heads with a scalp lock (Morgan 1959, 29). The historical society clearly wanted a monument to express its interest in Indian history; in doing so the society perpetuates the assumption that all Indians are the same.

Figure 4.2: Siouxification. No Kaw warrior had long hair or originally worshiped the white buffalo like in the monument “White Buffalo.” Photo by author (July 2006).



Inside, the museum has its strengths and weaknesses. Some displays are remarkably accurate while others imply Siouxification. A reproduction of a child’s teepee is displayed with text claim “playing tipi was as popular a Native American Indian game as playing house is for children today.” Not all tribes lived in teepees. The Sac and Fox lived in wooden lodges (Morgan 1959, 41), the Pawnee lived in semi-permanent lodges (McCartney 2003, 255), and the Kaw lived in complex earthen lodges (Hoobler 1993, 21). Continuing the theme is a giant teepee near the end of the Indian display, unaccompanied by a textual explanation. The assumption that all Indians lived in teepees is reinforced. Finally, all information about Indians ends in the “Trail and Frontier” section. The museum implies that Indians and their history ended with the Oregon Trail.

Citizen Potawatomi Community Center – Siouxification Infiltration

The citizen branch of the Potawatomi tribe would be the largest recognized Indian nation population-wise in Kansas if it owned a reservation (Boursaw 2006). Instead of owning and governing any of its own land, tribal members live throughout the Topeka area as United States citizens. A branch of the tribe opted to become citizens in the 1870s and has assimilated into the dominant culture of the United States (Boursaw 2006). Today the descendants of this group are known as the Citizen Band.

The tribe owns and operates a community center right off the auto tour which opened in 2005 (Boursaw 2006). Here the local Potawatomis hold community functions and rent out rooms for others. The nearby apartments are owned by the tribe and rented out to elderly members (Boursaw 2006). Roads with Potawatomi names like *Nishnabe* lead up to the community center. The exterior is covered with the Citizen Potawatomi tribal symbols. Modern-day Potawatomi culture dominates the landscape.

While the exterior of the community center is historically accurate, many of the decorations on the inside show the Siouxification of Potawatomi culture. Paintings on the wall are of generic Indians. One painting is a young Indian woman wearing a buckskin dress. Other displays depict stereotypical Indians. The painting “Founding Fathers” depicts Chief Joseph, Sitting Bull, Geronimo, and Red Cloud on Mount Rushmore. These Indians chose a path of resistance against United States expansion; this is the exact opposite of what the Citizen Potawatomis chose.

Figure 4.3: No Potawatomis, but this painting is placed up anyway, evoking Siouxification. Photo by author (July 2006).



Inside the community center office there is a picture dating to 1900. The people in the picture are dressed exquisitely in suits and gowns. “Half those women would die if you said they were Indians,” says Lymon Boursaw (2006) of his ancestors who are in the photograph. Boursaw adds that many of the Citizen Potawatomis have only recently taken pride in their heritage.

Oregon Trail Nature Park – Siouxification of the Kaw Redux

Two of the three murals at the Oregon Trail Nature Park are examples of No One is Home. The third mural, “Fall Hunt,” is as potent an example of Siouxification as the representations at the Kansas Museum of History.

Figure 4.4: Accuracy need not apply at the Oregon Trail Nature Park, as Kaw Indians are shown as Paleolithic Sioux. Photo by author (July 2006).



“Fall Hunt” displays Kaw Indians hunting buffalo (Jost and Loewenstein 2006, 20). There are many flaws with this depiction of Kaw. First is the long hair, which is that of the Sioux, not Kaw. The second flaw is Indians in loincloths; the Kaw and other southern tribes wore shirts (Lowie 1963, 51). This creates a Paleolithic impression of Siouxification. The interpretation is reinforced with the spear points the Kaw are using. The points resemble Clovis-style points that first appeared around 11,500 years ago (Adovasio and Pedler 2005, 46). Indians on a buffalo hunt used bows and arrows (Capps 1979, 66). In the mural the Kaw are driving the buffalo toward a cliff. However, cliff driving is not well documented in the southern plains (Lowie 1963, 18). Kaw hunters would encircle and shoot into a herd (Lowie 1963, 15).

“Fall Hunt” is an inaccurate depiction of a Kaw hunting party. The traits of the Kaw are replaced with a unique interpretation of Siouxification. The Kaw were a semi-agrarian culture which cultivated a third of an acre for each member (Lowie 1963, 23). However, these

characteristics do not fit into the Indian stereotypes. The artist, Osage Indian Cindy Martin, painted caricatures instead of the Kaw. “Fall Hunt” once again proves that even Indians are not immune from Siouxification.

Rock Creek Station – The Teepee Again

Rock Creek Station State Historical Park, operated by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission since 1980, memorializes a ranch that had been a supply stop at the end of the height of the Oregon Trail. The site has been restored by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (Franzwa 1997, 161). Reconstructed buildings, interpretive signs, wagon ruts, and a visitor center are the main attractions.

Rock Creek Station itself has no Indian history but the land does. The Otoe Indians arrived in southeastern Nebraska in the early 1700s (Wishart 1995, 4). The Otoe grew corn and lived in earthen lodges (Will and Hyde 1964, 50). The Otoe had teepees that were used only as temporary structures during long-term hunts (Perkins 2000). The tribe lived in the region until the 1880s (Wishart 1995, 239).

The visitor center has one panel dedicated to the Otoe. Photographs and a drawing of the Otoe village along the Big Blue River are shown besides Otoe artifacts. Despite being such a small display, it is a nice effort by the Game and Parks Commission to extend the center’s study focus to include Indians. Outside the visitor center however, Siouxification takes the primary role. At the west group of buildings sits the one and only thing on the landscape which is dedicated to Indians: a teepee. The teepee is a generalized version of the structure found amongst some of the Plains Indians. The standard Otoe teepee has three poles (Perkins 2000) but this one has thirteen. Thirteen poles are required for a small Sioux teepee (Standing Bear 1975, 13). The cultural difference is ignored by the Game and Parks Commission; the Otoe have been Siouxified.

Figure 4.5: Not a three pole Otoe teepee at Rock Creek Station, Nebraska. Photo by author (June 2007).



Great Platte River Road Archway Monument

Crossing Interstate 80 a mile east of the Kearney exit is the Great Platte River Road Archway Monument, a private monument in operation since 1999. The monument is a two-level museum that touches the ground north and south of the interstate. The museum is dedicated to the history of the Platte River Road. The road is a series of trails and roads starting with the Oregon Trail and the other overland trails, the Abraham Lincoln Highway, and ending with the present interstate. A sign at the ticket booth declares the monument’s purpose to “memorialize history” and to be “educational.”

Siouxification is apparent at the archway. Teepees are prominent near the entrance. Their style is similar to that of the Sioux. Museum visitors encounter Indian portrayals right away. A long haired, shirtless Indian figure points a mountain man or pioneer up the escalator

and into the museum proper. The first wall display shows a romanticized scene of Fort Kearny at the height of the Oregon Trail. This is where the memorialized history starts. The previous tribes like the Otoe and Potawatomi are ignored since they do not fit the stereotype that the archway monument wishes to portray.

There is one section where an Indian's point of view is given. At the end of the overland trails section and right before one goes upstairs to the Lincoln Highway exhibit a single room is dedicated to the Trail's effect on Indians. Pictures of famous Indians like Chief Joseph and Sitting Bull are on the walls. A sign states that immigrants brought disease and disrupted "ancient hunting grounds which sustained tribes for generations." Another textual display discusses how the West was lost to Indians, in part due to the trails that ended their way of life. While the loss of lands in the West was catastrophic for many tribes; not all had "ancient hunting grounds" which sustained them for generations and some tribes lost less than others. The Arkiara lost their homeland decades before the Oregon Trail because of ethnic cleansing on part of the Sioux. The lands affected by emigrants may have been lost by the Sioux but were hardly the Sioux's ancient home.

Siouxification is more than the depiction of a unique nation as having Sioux qualities. Siouxification can be a partial truthful statement such as teaching how some Indian tribes did lose the West completely. The myth creeps in with omission of the experience of all Plains Indians.

Museum of Nebraska Art – Parodying the Great Works

Tucked away in the middle of Kearney, Nebraska is the Museum of Nebraska Art. The museum is on the grounds of the University of Nebraska-Kearney and is funded by the state since its moving to Kearney in 1985. Artwork in the museum depicts modern or historical regions of Nebraska.

One section is dedicated to the Oregon Trail. Thomas Hart Benton painted several pieces about the Trail. Benton's collection of paintings, according to the informational display text, is a series of paintings made in the 1940s. The art pieces are meant to be illustrations for Francis Parkman's great work *The Oregon Trail*. According to the text, the paintings are "Nebraska as he [Benton] imagined it during the time of Parkman's journey."

Benton's Nebraska is one of Siouxified Indians with a slight twist. Instead of muscular he-men, these Indians are lanky, but wear war bonnets. Benton uses stereotypical Siouxification touches such as raids and violence to parody *The Oregon Trail*. "Indian Horse Thieves" shows wiry Indians in full regalia stealing horses while emigrants try to fight them off. "Indian Attack" depicts Indians launching a raid against an unknown target. These raiders also wear the standard war bonnets. These two episodes are nowhere found in Parkman's book. Siouxification goes from myth to official history with the blessing of Nebraska.

Pioneer Trails Museum – Last Stop of Siouxification

Bridgeport, Nebraska is the heart of what was Sioux territory during the time of the Oregon Trail. Most of the portrayals of Indians are therefore fairly accurate, with regard to the Siouxification theme. The primary reason for the lack of Siouxification sites west of Kearney is because most depictions of Plains Indians, which have stereotypical Sioux features, generally match the Plains Indians that settlers would have encountered along this section of the Oregon Trail. This makes Siouxification of Sioux, and Sioux-like Plains Indians like the Cheyenne, difficult. Difficult unfortunately does not mean impossible. Certain traits like war paint, arrowheads, and war bonnets can be overemphasized, though, making the Sioux look less like a nation than merely a roving war band. Another way to Siouxify the Sioux is to have an American Indian trait, whether it be arrowheads from the American Southwest or native clothes from the Pacific Northwest, used inaccurately to represent Plains Indians along the Oregon Trail. These two reasons make the locally owned and historical society-run Pioneer Trails Museum a site of Siouxification.

Figure 4.6: The Pioneer Trails Museum in Bridgeport, Nebraska takes pride in local culture but Siouxifies any Plains Indian heritage. Photo by author (July 2006).



The museum is operated by a volunteer staff of the Bridgeport Historical Society and has been open since 1992. The museum bills itself as dedicated to the history of the Overland Trails and is in a great position to do so; the Oregon, Mormon, Pony Express, and California trails are all within a mile of the building. However, instead of capitalizing on its situation with Trail history, the museum is a random display of antiques. Old dolls from the 1920s sit randomly on tables while several local veterans' uniforms gather dust against a wall. Only one display is dedicated to Indians and it reinforces the belief that all Indians are the same. A faded poster shows North American Indian arrowhead styles. There is nothing about local tribes of Great Plains Indians.

Parting Thoughts

Siouxification is much like No One is Home. Both mindsets are old and ingrained into American cultural history. For far too long, popular culture has either displayed the American West as vacant or full of Siouxified savages. Finally and most importantly, both themes rob history and place of their meaning. So much history is either generalized or forgotten because it is thought as “Indian history” rather than what it is: American history.

CHAPTER 5 - “Getting It Right” Accurate or Close-to-Accurate Depictions

Explaining Accuracy

Chapters three and four examine the inaccurate depictions of Indians along the Oregon Trail. These representations get American history wrong and give a false image of what the land and culture were like during the height of the Oregon Trail.

Not everything is inaccurate along the trail, however. Some sites accurately portray Plains Indians and their history, and therefore American history. These places tell of the triumphs and tragedies that took place during the epic era. Some portrayals in this category have a slight bias but are still mostly inclusive of the American Indian perspective.

This chapter is dedicated to the locations which are “Getting It Right.” These sites are concentrated in the eastern half of the study area but they are found as far west as the Nebraska-Wyoming border. They also tend to be local creations rather than federal or state monuments.

Table 5.1: Significant “Getting It Right” Sites

Potawatomi Mission	Topeka, Kansas
Indian Pay Station Museum	St. Marys, Kansas
Louis Vieux Family Graves	Belvue, Kansas
Pony Express Original Home Station #1	Marysville, Kansas
“The Great Smoke” Marker	Henry, Nebraska

Sites That Get It Right

Method

Table 5.1 lists the sites whose interpretations fit into the Getting It Right theme. For this section I describe the site's history, its importance to the Oregon Trail, and how the interpretation is an example of Getting It Right.

Saint Marys, Kansas Area – The Potawatomi's Story

Nestled in the center of the Kansas portion of the Oregon Trail is the town of Saint Marys. The town plays a major role in the history of the Trail and Kansas itself. The Potawatomi Indians settled in the region's Indian reservation with Jesuit missionaries who accompanied them from their previous Kansas reservation and their ancestral homes in the Great Lakes region (Franzwa 1997, 138). The Potawatomi are described as the most "Western" of all Indians (Hodge 1959, 290). The Indian's Catholic faith and the fact Saint Marys is built in a "Western" style are testimony to that fact. An Oregon Trail emigrant described the town as "very neat-looking place" with church buildings and "20 small log huts" that the Potawatomi lived in (Hoobler 1993, 72). The Jesuits used the Potawatomi missions as models in their efforts to Christianize the Indians and give them self-governance in the expanding United States. French groups like the Jesuits favored a form of integration of Indians into Western culture (Boursaw 2006).

A gem of the whole Oregon National Historic Trail and a very good site for accurate Plains Indian history is the Indian Pay Station Museum in Saint Marys operated by the Saint Marys Historical Society and opened in 1969. There are no wall murals or white marble statues that represent a false history here; instead there are pictures, trinkets, and literature which weave together the rich story of the Potawatomi, town history, and their role in the Oregon Trail epic. The museum is located one block off the auto tour and is well marked.

Pictures of the wood and even stone houses in which the Potawatomi lived are found along the wall and in books that are readily available for viewing. The construction material was the same for the homes, churches, and the trail trading post. Captions tell how the Indians and the Jesuits constructed all the buildings. Another picture shows a Potawatomi celebration dance. The Potawatomi are wearing both traditional and Western-style clothing. A display case in the

pay station shows a variety of everyday Potawatomi objects like smoke pipes and fabric. The volunteer tour guides inform visitors of the town and Indian's role in the Oregon Trail. The guides tell stories of Potawatomi guide Joseph Bertrend and Louis Vieux, a Potawatomi who operated a successful toll bridge. Finally, the museum has a wonderful library which features books like *Oregon Trail, The Jesuit Mission, and Town of Saint Marys* (1993).

Further outside of Saint Marys is Vieux Crossing. The crossing itself is now a bridge for a side road that goes over the Vermillion River. The crossing is four miles off the auto-tour and easy to find. However, it is located on a dirt road which may prevent tourists from journeying out into the rough to view the crossing.

Two historical signs describe the story of Vieux. Both tell of his mixed French and Potawatomi ancestry. The sign at the Vieux family graveyard tells how Vieux worked as an advocate for the Potawatomi. Louis Vieux's gravestone combines the dual backgrounds of Vieux. The grave marker has a large Catholic cross yet the worn text boldly and proudly proclaims him as "one of the headmen" of the Potawatomi.

Figure 5.1: Louis Vieux’s Grave Reflects His Dual Natures. Photo by author (May 2006).



The Potawatomi fared better than most other Indian tribes in the interpretive sites examined for this site. Both the mission museum in Topeka and the Saint Marys complex of sites accurately describe this unique Plains tribe. Perhaps this display of the Potawatomi is immune from Siouxification because of the unique path the tribe took and the investment that locals have in keeping the history alive. It may also be immune from No One is Home because of the Potawatomi’s role in the establishment of Saint Marys.

Pony Express Original Home Station #1 – “So Close”

Marysville, Kansas takes pride in its trail history. Public displays boast of the town’s role in the Oregon Trail and the Pony Express. The town’s whole purpose revolved around the trail. A historical park right outside of town describes how the first resident, Frank Marshall, operated a ferry in 1851 and how the first post office opened in 1854. The town soon prospered with both trail and Pony Express traffic.

Down the main road, Eighth Street, and past the mural featured in the No One is Home chapter is the Pony Express Original Home Station #1. The station is dedicated to town history and western expansion. Attached is a stable barn constructed in 1859 for the horses of the Pony Express (National Park Service 2005, 22).

The museum's displays cover almost all of Marysville's history. The visitor first sees the exhibits on Marshall and town history focusing on the 1850s and the Civil War. Indian representations here would best fit into No One is Home. A painting of the Marshall Ferry landing shows a pioneer and Indian trading with teepees next to a cluster of buildings in the background. The front of the museum has the Lecompton Kansas seal that has two Indians hunting buffalo in the background and a farmer plowing a field in the foreground. These displays incorporate Indians into Kansas history but merely as background figures.

The back of the museum saves it from being yet another example of No One is Home. Displays are dedicated to the Indians that inhabited Kansas and these do a reasonably good job at showing the true characteristics of each nation. The displays are not perfect, there is still cultural ignorance, but considering what else is found on the trail it is a welcome improvement.

A display of locally-found arrowheads begins the Indian portion of the museum. The wide range of Indian arrowheads may seem quaint at first but it sets a mood of tying the Indians to the location. The main display however, are the dioramas. According to the museum tour guide, the dioramas were created during the Great Depression as part of a public works program to keep artists employed. The displays depict scenes of Indian life before Kansas was a territory. Some displays show extraordinary events such as a buffalo hunt or a Kiowa Eagle Dance. Others show more of a routine events such as a Kaw harvest gathering or Pawnee pottery making. What sets these displays apart is that they do not show all Indians as a Sioux-stereotype that hunt buffalo, but instead make the distinction between tribes and show how some lived in huts and trading. This demonstrate a more advanced culture. The captions that accompany the dioramas do not patronize but describe the scene and the story of how the depiction reflects the culture of the Indian nation. The pottery caption tells how the pottery was made and describes the hut in the background. All this expresses the semi-permanence that the Pawnee Indians had in reality. The Kaw Harvest caption mentions a major Kansa village near Manhattan, Kansas and details both the permanent and nomadic lifestyles of the nation by mentioning their use of teepees while hunting.

Figure 5.2: “A Kansa Harvest” at Pony Express Original Home Station #1 in Marysville, Kansas portrays agricultural practices. Photo by Author (May 2006).



Figure 5.3: “Pottery Making” at Pony Express Original Home Station #1 in Marysville, Kansas shows the pre-industrial culture of Kansas Indians. Photo by Author (May 2006).



Not all the displays are as accurate as Pottery Making or Kansa Harvest. Many depictions of male Indians show them as shirtless and muscular. The native diet hardly accounts for these features. There also is no distinction or pattern to which Indians are portrayed with long hair or short hair styles.

“The Great Smoke” Marker – A Final, Simple Truth

Oregon Trail tourists leaving Nebraska and entering Wyoming are probably focused upon locations around Fort Laramie for good reason. The popular guide books do not mention anything between Scotts Bluff and Fort Laramie. One roadside sign, established by the Nebraska State Historical Society, that describes an event of significant historical importance is easily missed, yet I argue this site should be seen everyone who is interested in the history of the Oregon Trail. The road sign marker of this place is dedicated to “The Great Smoke.”

Figure 5.4: The great hope for peace is accurately displayed. Photo by author (July 2006).



In the fall of 1851 a massive treaty meeting was organized by the United States government in an effort to secure peace along the Oregon Trail. Representatives of the Arapahoe, Cheyenne, Sioux, and nine other tribes gathered outside modern-day Henry, Nebraska (Franzwa 1997, 219). The original spot was Fort Laramie itself but the 10,000 Indians who gathered required a larger location (Franzwa 1997, 219). Soldiers were needed to keep the peace and the nations camped in separate areas.

Father Peter De Smet, of Saint Marys fame, arrived and acted as the liaison among the tribes (Franzwa 1997, 219). At the end of the treaty negotiations the nations agreed to the peace terms set by the United States government, which promised to pay an annual fee to compensate for the damage settlers did to the Indians' territory (Franzwa 1997, 220). The treaty only lasted for a few years and the Indian Wars continued until the defeat of the Sioux. However, for a brief time in late 1851 there was a great smoke for a great peace. The short-lived agreement secured

travel for thousands upon thousands of emigrants and helped establish the American presence in Oregon.

The roadside sign is the only interpretive marker of the great meeting and hope for peace. It may be small and easy to pass while traveling along the Oregon Trail Auto Tour however, it is an unbiased record of a past event and is truly part of a united American history.

CHAPTER 6 - “Oregon!” Parting Thoughts

Rereading the Trail Diary - Realizations

This thesis has been like the Oregon Trail experiences of emigrants, Indians, and others. It has been full of the triumph of discovery, the tragedy of losing my “trail partner,” my father, and my realization of the role of Indians in the past and present of the trail landscape.

Both the triumph and tragedy have changed me greatly. Seeing the Oregon Trail sites is immensely enjoyable; the difficulty of getting to some locations made me appreciate the sites all the more once I reached them. Reading about the sites and putting them into context allows me to understand history the way it happened and judge the accuracy of Indian representations. I now realize that the Indian perspective of the Oregon Trail needs to be taken into account. Without the Indian nations the trail experience and the American epic would have been so different. In addition, today there is no difference in the status of citizenship because of race: we are all Americans and we must realize that when studying history. Plains Indian history is as much of American history as the emigrant history.

The realization of how Indians are portrayed along the Oregon Trail is disheartening. The fact that No One is Home and Siouxification are major themes in interpretation is depressing. These views of the past are based on old biases but they remain in the public consciousness. Sometimes ignorance is to blame for this while other times shame of the Indian removal is the reason Indians have been expunged from history. Siouxification is the result of bigotry. Media interpretations, bad education, and a lack of appreciation of the diversity among the nations all lead to the assumption that all Indians are alike. This ugliness has made its way into modern Indian culture. The loss of identity in the Citizen Band of the Potawatomi tribe, both by government policy and the “shame” of being an Indian, is being counteracted by a resurgence of pride in Indian identity. However, some Potawatomi are grabbing onto anything Indian, including the traits and identity of tribes who are completely unrelated. This is like an American of Irish descent taking on Estonian customs to remind himself of the “old ways.” Siouxification distorts the past and makes identity and representations just as inaccurate as No One is Home does.

Not all is lost though. Accuracy exists among the representations of Indians along the Oregon Trail at the Great Smoke roadside marker and the Indian Pay Station Museum in Saint Marys. The role of Indians is not minimized or caricatured. Events and cultures are instead accurately interpreted, whether it shows the United States government, Indian nations, or representatives of both as positive or negative, strong or weak.

Missing Half of the Plains Indians – The Lack of Women

In the course of examining the Plains Indian representations, it became noticeable that very few of the visual representations portray Plains Indian women. Not one of the No One is Home and Siouxification sites have imagery of Plains Indian women, and Getting It Right does show Plains Indian women at the Potawatomi Pay Station Museum and the Pony Express Original Home Station #1.

Besides the possibility of ignorance, other reasons possibly explain the absence of Plains Indian women. Siouxification shows Plains Indians as mere roaming bands of men, usually hunting. These portrayals make the Plains Indians more like the stereotypes of Hun barbarians that have no place to call home. The depiction of women would show that the Plains Indians were more than just men, that they were a society with a structure. Showing women in traditional duties like taking care of children, gardening, or helping butcher meat would show the society of Plains Indians and grant them a sense of permanence. The same holds true for No One is Home. It would be hard to justify no one is home if male and female Indians were shown together, even if only in the background.

Women of European descent are shown in representations along the Oregon Trail, though. The Blue Rapids mural has an emigrant woman using a metal pump while her daughter stands nearby watching roaming Plains Indians. The mural in Marysville shows a white woman in a wagon, as does “Oregon Bound” at the Oregon Trail Nature Park. All these portrayals of women suggest that the overlanders were bringing American society in a perfect nuclear family, Manifest Destiny style.

Reports of Indians – American Indians’ Lack of Interest

The Oregon Trail was an epic event in for both the emigrants and Plains Indians. The United States government in Washington, D.C., had to take into account overlanders and their

safety while all Indian nations on the Great Plains were affected by the loss of land, environment change, and increasingly large flow of colonizers.

Mainstream American culture has done much to memorialize the Oregon Trail. American Indians have not. Of the thirty-two sites discussed in this thesis only one of them is owned and/or operated by an Indian nation: the Citizen Potawatomi Community Center in Rossville, Kansas. However, this site does not portray anything of the Oregon Trail and in fact falls into the category of Siouxification.

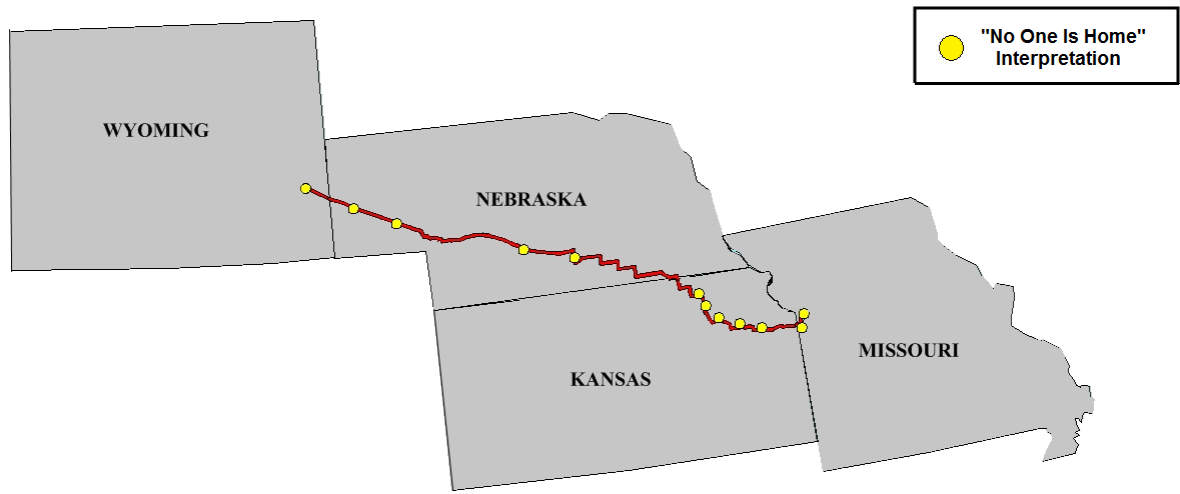
Unlike other controversial American Indian monuments or memorials, ranging from Sacagawea statues to school mascots, there are no national, regional, or even local campaigns by American Indians to get their point-of-view and version of history memorialized. The reason for this is two-fold. The first one is geographical. The only Indian tribe still along the Oregon Trail is the Citizen Potawatomi tribe, a tribe that chose to embrace American citizenship and American culture rather than resist. The Kaw, Pawnee, Sioux, and other Plains Indians nations have all been removed elsewhere and replaced by settlers from eastern America and Europe (Wishart 1995). This differentiates the Oregon Trail from the Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail and the twelve reservations crossed by it. With only one organized local American Indian group along the Great Plains section of the trail, there is a severely limited population to start a local, indigenous effort to memorialize the Plains Indians perspective. The second reason for the lack of American Indian campaigns is historical-cultural. The various plains tribes and their ancestor nations were in the Great Plains for time periods between millennia and a few years before the Oregon Trail-era began. These nations have many other cultural experiences they wish to remember or fight for: other Sioux tribes are occupied with preservation of their sacred sites like the Black Hills in South Dakota or Devils Tower in Wyoming; the Potawatomi are still finding a balance between American and their former culture; and the Kaw are trying to keep their culture alive in Oklahoma without a full blooded member since the last one died in 2000. The Oregon Trail was merely a blip in time to these people, an event which helped herald an end of an age, the Indian dominance of the Plains.

Locations on a Map - Dimensions

One goal of this study is to see if there are any spatial or temporal correlations to the categories of representations. On the temporal scale No One is Home is found on old art work at

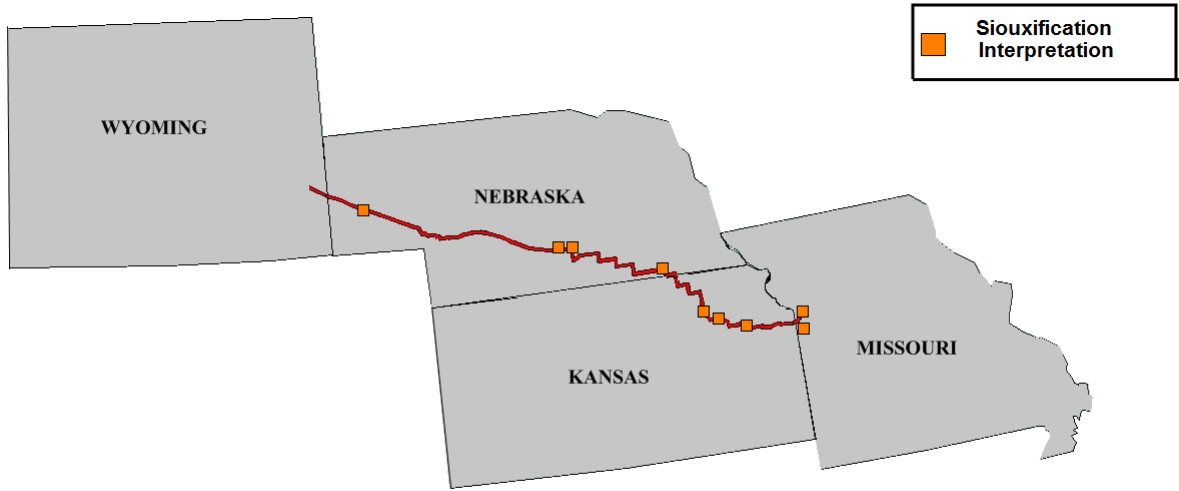
the National Frontier Trails Museum in Independence, Missouri to the 1990s-constructed silo at the Oregon Trail Nature Park. Siouxification is cross-generational. Its origin spawns from the contemporary emigrant stories, which were fearful of so-called savage Indians. Furthermore, popular media at the time widely embellished such folklore. These stories became the stereotype for all Plains Indians. Today, Siouxification is found at the Kansas Museum of History with modern artwork showing a romanticized image of an Indian next to a white buffalo. Getting it Right also crosses generations. The panoramas at the Pony Express Original Home Station #1 are from the Great Depression, while the Indian Pay Station is a modern museum.

Figure 6.1: No One Is Home interpretive sites are spread out while having more in the eastern half of the study area.



"No One Is Home" Interpretations

Figure 6.2: Siouxification interpretive sites are concentrated in the east with the outlier at Bridgeport, Nebraska's Pioneer Trails Museum.



Siouxification Interpretations

Figure 6.3: Getting It Right Interpretations sites are few with four of the five in Kansas.



"Getting It Right" Interpretations

Spatially there is also a lack of correlation. No One is Home is found in both Jackson County Courthouse Square in Independence, Missouri and Fort Laramie, Wyoming, with the woeful lack of Indian history. Siouxification can be seen in the eastern section, as well as western locations such as Bridgeport, Nebraska. Getting it Right is heavily loaded on the eastern

section of the trail between Topeka and Saint Marys. The representations here depict the Potawatomi. The sites around Saint Marys are accurate because of local interest in historical accuracy, and ties to the Potawatomi community in Rossville, Kansas, and other nearby locales. The one geographical outlier of Getting it Right, the Great Smoke roadside marker, is a Nebraska State Historical Society sign.

Local Does Not Necessarily Mean Accurate

As noted before in chapter five, many of the Getting It Right interpretations are local operations, both privately owned and local-government sponsored. The interpretations around Saint Marys, the Pony Express museum in Marysville, and various highway signs by local and state historical groups give an initial impression that local representations are more accurate. This claim is not universal, though. Plains Indian representations at the Blue Rapids Mural, Oregon Trail Nature Park, and the Bridgeport Pioneer Trails Museum demonstrate local portrayals can be inaccurate.

From my experiences along the Oregon Trail, and previous observations of monuments and memorials, I realized accurate local historical representations are usually the result of a passionate, proud effort to capture local history. The volunteers at the Saint Marys' Indian Pay Station Museum and other historical societies devote great efforts for little or no financial gain. A labor of love compels residents to donate items, share stories, and research the past, so that present and future generations may learn the history and lessons from it.

A combination of ignorance and wishful thinking causes local communities to create interpretations that fall into No One Is Home or Siouxification. The expulsion of Plains Indians has shed a critical link between cultures and peoples that is important to have to ensure transfer of historical knowledge. The lack of historical records dealing with Plains Indians at a specific place, and the absence of native written records, combine to make much of their history between circa 11,000 B.C. and the late A.D. 1700s unknown. Inconvenient truths also lead to incomplete portrayals of Plains Indians. Many people, organizations, and communities have decided to show American and European emigrants settling in a virgin wonderland. Representations like "Oregon Bound" and the Blue Rapids murals give the impression that it was whites who brought civilization to the wilderness. In doing so, it signifies that the Great Plains were either absent of, or briefly passed through by, Plains Indians. These interpretations praise the communities'

mythic founders and force the thoughts and unpleasant lessons of Plains Indian removal - of the Indians themselves, as well as the removal of their history - out of sight and mind.

Unloading the Wagon – Future Research and What’s Next?

There are a variety of possibilities for future research. First, a study of representations of Indians along the Oregon Trail past Fort Laramie is a logical step. Obviously the Sioux form the basis for Indian depictions on the Great Plains but after the Rocky Mountains portrayals may be different because of the difference among nations. Does the Sioux stereotype prevail farther west? Studying other groups also presents future research opportunities. Examining depictions of settlers may reveal insights on the cultural mindset relating to migration and the American spirit. Are most representations like that on the silo of the Oregon Trail Nature Park showing a lone American family “roughing it” on green virgin territory, or do portrayals show a wagon train working together as a community forging American progress? A complete Oregon Trail study could also examine whether the portrayal of Indians as strong, young men continues on into the Pacific Northwest where stereotypes of Indians are drastically different than those of the Great Plains.

As for this thesis I see the possibility of getting it published in an edited form to add to the subfields of cultural and Great Plains studies. This thesis also has applications outside of academia. In my career as a professional cultural geographer I have already looked at the ways in which monuments and memorials are used on the landscape to interpret the past and control space. While the latter is not dealt with this thesis it is an organic extension of the research. Understanding landscape is becoming critical in the professional world and the United States government has come to appreciate the importance of cultural terrain both in military operations and foreign policy. Those who know how monuments and memorials work can better inform others about sense of place.

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