TEXT PACKET

Black Kettle and the Washita River Massacre

Contents

PRIMARY SOURCES

4 *Treaty*

9 *Newspaper Clippings*

10 *Washita Memories,* Richard G. Hardorff, ed.

SECONDARY SOURCES

19 *Black Kettle,* Thom Hatch

31 *Conquest of the Southern Plains,* Charles J. Brill

PRIMARY SOURCES

Treaty with the Cheyenne and Arapaho; October 14, 1865

Articles of a treaty made and concluded at the camp on the Little Arkansas River, in the State of Kansas, on the fourteenth day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-five, by and between John B. Sanborn, William S. Harney, Thomas Murphy, Kit Carson, William W. Bent, Jesse H. Leavenworth, and James Steele, commissioners on the part of the United States, and the undersigned, chiefs and head-men of and representing the confederate tribes of Arrapahoe and Cheyenne Indians of the Upper Arkansas River, they being duly authorized by their respective tribes to act in the premises.

ARTICLE 1.

It is agreed by the parties to this treaty that hereafter perpetual peace shall be maintained between the people and Government of the United States and the Indians parties hereto, and that the Indians parties hereto, shall forever remain at peace with each other, and with all other Indians who sustain friendly relations with the Government of the United States. For the purpose of enforcing the provisions of this article it is agreed that in case hostile acts or depredations are committed by the people of the United States, or by Indians on friendly terms with the United States, against the tribe or tribes, or the individual members of the tribe or tribes, who are parties to this treaty, such hostile acts or depredations shall not be redressed by a resort to arms, but the party or parties aggrieved shall submit their complaints through their agent to the President of the United States, and thereupon an impartial arbitration shall be had, under his direction, and the award thus made shall be binding on all parties interested, and the Government of the United States will in good faith enforce the same. And the Indians, parties hereto, on their part, agree, in case crimes or other violations of law shall be committed by any person or persons, members of their tribe, such person or persons shall, upon complaint being made, in writing, to their agent, superintendent of Indian affairs, or to other proper authority, by the party injured, and verified by affidavit, be delivered to the person duly authorized to take such person or persons into custody, to the end that such person or persons may be punished according to the laws of the United States.

ARTICLE 2.

The United States hereby agree that the district of country embraced within the following limits, or such portion of the same as may hereafter be designated by the President of the United States for that purpose, viz: commencing at the mouth of the Red Creek or Red Fork of the Arkansas River; thence up said creek or fork to its source; thence westwardly to a point on the Cimarone River, opposite the mouth of Buffalo Creek; thence due north to the Arkansas River; thence down the same to the beginning, shall be, and is hereby, set apart for the absolute and undisturbed use and occupation of the tribes who are parties to this treaty, and of such other friendly tribes as they may from time to time agree to admit among them, and that no white person, except officers, agents, and employees of the Government, shall go upon or settle within the country embraced within said limits, unless formerly admitted and incorporated into some one of the tribes lawfully residing there, according to its laws and usages: Provided, however, That said Indians

shall not be required to settle upon said reservation until such time as the United States shall have extinguished all claims of title thereto on the part of other Indians, so that the Indians parties hereto may live thereon at peace with all other tribes: Provided, however, That as soon as practicable, with the assent of said tribe, the President of the United States shall designate for said tribes a reservation, no part of which shall be within the State of Kansas, and cause them as soon as practicable to remove to and settle thereon, but no such reservation shall be designated upon any reserve belonging to any other Indian tribe or tribes without their consent.

The Indians parties hereto, on their part, expressly agree to remove to and accept as their permanent home the country embraced within said limits whenever directed so to do by the President of the United States, in accordance with the provisions of this treaty, and that they will not go from said country for hunting or other purposes without the consent in writing of their agent or other authorized person, such written consent in all cases specifying the purpose for which such leave is granted, and shall be borne with them upon their excursions as evidence that they are rightfully away from their reservation, and shall be respected by all officers, employees, and citizens of the United States as their sufficient safeguard and protection against injury or damage in person or property by any and all persons whomsoever.

It is further agreed by the Indians parties hereto that when absent from their reservation they will refrain from the commission of any depredations or injuries to the person or property of all persons sustaining friendly relations with the Government of the United States; that they will not, while so absent, encamp by day or night within ten miles of any of the main traveled routes or roads through the country to which they go, or of the military posts, towns, or villages therein, without the consent of the commanders of such military posts, or of the civil authorities of such towns or villages; and that henceforth they will, and do hereby, relinquish all claims or rights in and to any portion of the United States or Territories, except such as is embraced within the limits aforesaid, and more especially their claims and rights in and to the country bounded as follows, viz: beginning at the junction of the north and south forks of the Platte River; thence up the north fork to the top of the principal range of the Rocky Mountains, or to the Red Buttes; thence southwardly along the summit of the Rocky Mountains to the headwaters of the Arkansas River; thence down the Arkansas River to the Cimarone crossing of the same; thence to the place of beginning; which country they claim to have originally owned, and never to have relinquished the title thereto.

ARTICLE 3.

It is further agreed that until the Indians parties hereto have removed to the reservation provided for by the preceding article in pursuance of the stipulations thereof, said Indians shall be, and they are hereby, expressly permitted to reside upon and range at pleasure throughout the unsettled portions of that part of the country they claim as originally theirs, which lies between the Arkansas and Platte Rivers; and that they shall and will not go elsewhere, except upon the terms and conditions prescribed by the preceding article in relation to leaving the reservation thereby provided for: Provided, That the provisions of the preceding article in regard to encamping within ten miles of main travelled routes, military posts, towns, and villages shall be in full force as to occupancy of the country named and permitted by the terms of this article: Provided, further, That they, the said Indians, shall and will at all times during such occupancy, without delay, report to the commander of the nearest military post the presence in or approach to said country of any hostile bands of Indians whatsoever.

ARTICLE 4.

It is further agreed by the parties hereto that the United States may lay off and build through the reservation, provided for by Article 2 of this treaty, such roads or highways as may be deemed necessary; and may also establish such military posts within the same as may be found

necessary in order to preserve peace among the Indians, and in order to enforce such laws, rules, and regulations as are now, or may from time to time be, prescribed by the President and Congress of the United States for the protection of the rights of persons and property among the Indians residing upon said reservation; and further, that in time of war such other military posts as may be considered essential to the general interests of the United States may be established: Provided, however, That upon the building of such roads, or establishment of such military posts, the amount of injury sustained by reason thereof by the Indians inhabiting said reservation shall be ascertained under direction of the President of the United States, and thereupon such compensation shall be made to said Indians as in the judgment of the Congress of the United States may be deemed just and proper.

ARTICLE 5.

At the special request of the Cheyenne and Arrapahoe Indians, parties to this treaty, the United States agree to grant, by patent in fee-simple, to the following-named persons, all of whom are related to the Cheyennes or Arrapahoes by blood, to each an amount of land equal to one section of six hundred and forty acres, viz: To Mrs. Margaret Wilmarth and her children, Virginia Fitzpatrick, and Andrew Jackson Fitzpatrick; to Mrs. Mary Keith and her children, William Keith, Mary J. Keith, and Francis Keith; to Mrs. Matilda Pepperdin and her child, Miss Margaret Pepperdin; to Robert Poisal and John Poisal; to Edmund Guerrier, Rosa Guerrier, and Julia Guerrier; to William W. Bent's daughter, Mary Bent Moore, and her three children, Adia Moore, William Bent Moore, and George Moore; to William W. Bent's children, George Bent, Charles Bent, and Julia Bent; to A-ma-che, the wife of John Prowers, and her children, Mary Prowers and Susan Prowers; to the children of Ote-se-ot-see, wife of John Y. Sickles, viz: Margaret, Minnie, and John; to the children of John S. Smith, interpreter, William Gilpin Smith, and daughter Armama; to Jenny Lind Crocker, daughter of Ne-sou-hoe, or Are-you-there, wife of Lieutenant Crocker; to - Winsor, daughter of Tow-e-nah, wife of A. T. Winsor, sutler, formerly at Fort Lyon. Said lands to be selected under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, from the reservation established by the 1st article of their treaty of February 18, A.D. 1861: Provided, That said locations shall not be made upon any lands heretofore granted by the United States to any person, State, or corporation, for any purpose.

ARTICLE 6.

The United States being desirous to express its condemnation of, and, as far as may be, repudiate the gross and wanton outrages perpetrated against certain bands of Cheyenne and Arrapahoe Indians, on the twenty-ninth day of November, A.D. 1841, at Sand Creek, in Colorado Territory, while the said Indians were at peace with the United States, and under its flag, whose protection they had by lawful authority been promised and induced to seek, and the Government being desirous to make some suitable reparation for the injuries then done, will grant three hundred and twenty acres of land by patent to each of the following-named chiefs of said bands, viz: Moke-ta-ve-to, or Black Kettle; Oh-tah-ha-ne-so-weel, or Seven Bulls; Alik-ke-home-ma, or Little Robe; Moke-tah-vo-ve-hoe, or Black White Man; and will in like manner grant to each other person of said bands made a widow, or who lost a parent upon that occasion, one hundred and sixty acres of land, the names of such persons to be ascertained under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior: Provided, That said grants shall be conditioned that all devises, grants, alienations, leases, and contracts relative to said lands, made or entered into during the period of fifty years from the date of such patents, shall be unlawful and void. Said lands shall be selected under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior within the limits of country hereby set apart as a reservation for the Indians parties to this treaty, and shall be free from assessment and taxation so long as they remain inalienable. The United States will also pay in United States securities, animals, goods, provisions, or such other useful articles as may, in the discretion of the Secretary of the Interior, be deemed best adapted to the respective wants and conditions of the persons named in the schedule hereto annexed, they being present and members of the bands

who suffered at Sand Creek, upon the occasion aforesaid, the sums set opposite their names, respectively, as a compensation for property belonging to them, and then and there destroyed or taken from them by the United States troops aforesaid.

ARTICLE 7.

The United States agree that they will expend annually during the period of forty years, from and after the ratification of this treaty, for the benefit of the Indians who are parties hereto, and of such others as may unite with them in pursuance of the terms hereof, in such manner and for such purposes as, in the judgment of the Secretary of the Interior, for the time being, will best subserve their wants and interests as a people, the following amounts, that is to say, until such time as said Indians shall be removed to their reservation, as provided for by Article 2 of this treaty, an amount which shall be equal to twenty dollars per capita for each person entitled to participate in the beneficial provisions of this treaty, and from and after the time when such removal shall have been accomplished, an amount which shall be equal to forty dollars per capita for each person entitled as aforesaid. Such proportion of the expenditure provided for by this article as may be considered expedient to distribute in the form of annuities shall be delivered to said Indians as follows, viz: one-third thereof during the spring, and two-thirds thereof during the autumn of each year.

For the purpose of determining from time to time the aggregate amount to be expended under the provisions of this article, it is agreed that the number entitled to its beneficial provisions the coming year is two thousand eight hundred, and that an accurate census of the Indians entitled shall be taken at the time of the annuity payment in the spring of each year by their agent of other person designated for that purpose by the Secretary of the Interior, which census shall be the basis on which the amount to be expended the next ensuing year shall be determined.

ARTICLE 8.

The Indians parties to this treaty expressly covenant and agree that they will use their utmost endeavor to induce that portion of the respective tribes not now present to unite with them and acceed to the provisions of this treaty, which union and accession shall be evidenced and made binding on all parties whenever such absentees shall have participated in the beneficial provisions of this treaty.

ARTICLE 9.

Upon the ratification of this treaty all former treaties are hereby abrogated. In testimony whereof, the said Commissioners as aforesaid, and the undersigned chiefs and headmen of the confederated tribes of the Arrapahoes and Cheyennes of the Upper Arkansas, have hereunto set their hands and seals, at the place and on the day and year first hereinbefore written.

John B. Sanborn,
Wm. S. Harney,
Thos. Murphy,
Kit Carson,
Wm. W. Bent,
J. H. Leavenworth,
James Steele,
Commissioners on the part of the United States.

Moke-ta-ve-to, or Black Kettle, head chief, his x mark.
Oh-to-ah-ne-so-to-wheo, or Seven Bulls, chief, his x mark.
Hark-kah-o-me, or Little Robe, chief, his x mark.
Moke-tah-vo-ve-ho, or Black White Man, chief, his x mark.
Mun-a-men-ek, or Eagle's Head, headman, his x mark.
O-to-ah-nis-to, or Bull that Hears, headman, his x mark.
On the part of the Cheyennes.

Oh-has-tee, or Little Raven, head chief, his x mark.
Oh-hah-mah-hah, or Storm, chief, his x mark.
Pah-uf-pah-top, or Big Mouth, chief, his x mark.
Ah-cra-kah-tau-nah, or Spotted Wolf, chief, his x mark.
Ah-nah-wat-tan, or Black Man, headman, his x mark.
Nah-a-nah-cha, or Chief in Everything, headman, his x mark.
Chi-e-nuk, or Haversack, headman, his x mark.
On the part of the Arrapahoes.

Signed and sealed in the presence of -
John S. Smith, United States interpreter.
W. R. Irwin, secretary.
O. T. Atwood, secretary.
S. A. Kingman, secretary.
D. C. McNeil,
E. W. Wynkoop,
Bon. H. Van Havre,
J. E. Badger,
W. W. Rich.

N.B. – The Apache tribe was brought into the provisions of the above treaty by the second article of the treaty with the Apaches, Cheyennes and Arrapahoes, proclaimed May 26, 1866.

Source:
Indian Affairs : Laws and Treaties
Vol II (Treaties)
Compiled and Edited By Charles J. Kappler LL. M.
Clerk to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
Washington, DC : Government Printing Office, 1904

Newspaper Clippings

<Back to search result list

The Colorado Weekly Chieftain, December 10, 1868 — UNKNOWN [ARTICLE]

BATTLE WITH THE INDIANS.

Gen. Custar had a fight with Black Kettle's band of Indians on the 28th of November, on the Washita river. The accounts state that 150 Indians, including Black Kettle, were killed, and 53 taken prisoners. Among other property captured by Gen. Custar were about, 1,000 horses. Capt. Louis Hamilton was killed; Lieut-Col. Barnitz severely wounded. One soldier of the Seventh Cavalry was killed, and fourteen wounded. The Indians are represented to have fought desperately, but to have been overpowered and very badly whipped.

<Back to search result list

Jefferson County Graphic, Volume 19, Number 17, May 1, 1903 — Oklahoma's Only Battlefield. [ARTICLE]

Oklahoma's Only Battlefield

The only battle ever fought on what is now Oklahoma soil took place on the Washita river near the Antelope hills. Here in 1868 Gen. Custer, with 900 cavalry, engaged in a deadly combat with Black Kettle, a Cheyenne chief, with an unknown number of warriors. Custer lost nineteen soldiers and one officer, but won the fight, killing Chief Black Kettle, with 103 braves, and taking fifty-three prisoners.—Kansas City Journal.

WASHITA MEMORIES

Eyewitness Views of Custer's Attack on Black Kettle's Village

compiled and edited by
RICHARD G. HARDORFF

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA PRESS
Norman

5

Black Kettle, Cheyenne

Born about 1797 in the Black Hills of present South Dakota, Black Kettle (Moke-tah-vah-to) was the son of Black Hawk, or Hawk Stretched Out, a Sutai council chief who died young. His mother was a Sutai named Sparrow Hawk Woman, or Little Brown Back Woman. Black Kettle gained prominence as a warrior in 1838 during the great battle against the Kiowas, Comanches, and Apaches on Wolf Creek in western Oklahoma. In 1853 he carried the Sacred Arrows against the Pawnees and later led the first Cheyenne raiding party into Old Mexico. In the autumn of 1854, he was the leader of a war party against the Utes. During the retreat, his young wife was captured and was never heard of again.

In 1855 Black Kettle married into Bear Feathers's Wutapiu band and was elected council chief upon the latter's death. In the winter of 1856–57, he led a raiding party against the Pawnee to recover a herd of stolen ponies, successfully returning with six Pawnee scalps in addition to the stolen stock. In 1857 the Cheyenne leader was present at the Smoky Hill encampment when Col. Edwin V. Sumner led his unconventional saber charge against the Indians.

By 1861 Black Kettle realized that the survival of his people depended on peaceful relations with the whites and agreed to sign the Fort Wise Treaty, the first chief to do so. But his trust was shattered at Sand Creek in 1864 with the genocidal attack against innocent men, women, and children by Chivington's volunteer troops. Black Kettle's wife sustained nine bullet wounds but miraculously survived. In October 1865 government commissioners met with Black Kettle, who spoke sorrowfully of the people who had died because they had trusted him, adding that his "shame was as big as the earth."

Despite the betrayal of his people, Black Kettle continued to pursue peaceful relations with the whites and signed the Treaty of the Little Arkansas, ceding all the lands between the Arkansas and Platte rivers. To compensate the Cheyennes for their sufferings at Sand Creek, each widow and orphan was granted 160 acres of land and each chief received a half-section on the Arkansas reservation. The land provisions were never fulfilled. During a council with Agent Wynkoop in 1866, Black Kettle requested restitution for the six hundred ponies lost at Sand Creek and the return of two Cheyenne children taken captive by Chivington's men. Neither request was honored. Despite threats from the powerful Dog Soldiers, the chief signed the Medicine Lodge Treaty in 1867, by which the Cheyennes agreed to accept a reservation in Indian Territory.

In October 1868 Black Kettle's band hunted buffalo near the Antelope Hills in the western part of present Oklahoma. Acting upon rumors of troop movements against the Cheyennes, Black Kettle and a small delegation traveled to Fort Cobb for a conference with General Hazen. Their request to relocate their people nearer to the agency for protection was denied. Hazen advised them to return to their winter camps and to make peace with the soldiers of General Sheridan. Destiny would not give them that opportunity. On November 27 the bands of Black Kettle and Little Rock were annihilated by Custer's brutal dawn attack. Black Kettle and his wife were among the first to die.

The following speech by Black Kettle was made at Fort Cobb on November 20, 1868. It represents the last recorded words of a man who remained one of the best Indian allies of the whites despite strained relations. The statement is contained in U.S. Senate, Indian Battle on the Washita River, *40th Congress, 3d session, Senate Executive Document 18.*

Speech
November 20, 1868

Record of a conversation held between Colonel and Brevet Major General W. B. Hazen,[1] United States army, on special service, and chiefs of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes of Indians, Fort Cobb, Indian Territory, November 20, 1868.

[1]For information on Hazen, see the introduction to chapter 26.

Black Kettle, Cheyenne chief. I always feel well while I am among these Indians—the Caddoes, Wichitas, Wacoes, Keechies, etc.—as I know they are all my friends; and I do not feel afraid to go among the white men, because I feel them to be my friends also. The Cheyennes, when south of the Arkansas, did not wish to return to the north side because they feared trouble there, but were continually told that they had better go there, as they would be rewarded for so doing.[2] The Cheyennes do not fight at all this side of the Arkansas; they do not trouble Texas, but north of the Arkansas they are almost always at war. When lately north of the Arkansas, some young Cheyennes were fired upon and then the fight began. I have always done my best to keep my young men quiet, but some will not listen, and since the fighting began I have not been able to keep them all at home. But we all want peace, and I would be glad to move all my people down this way; I could then keep them all quietly near camp. My camp is now on the Washita, 40 miles east of Antelope Hills, and I have there about 180 lodges.

I speak only for my own people; I cannot speak nor control the Cheyennes north of the Arkansas.

....

General Hazen. The Great Father . . . sent [me] here as a peace chief; all here is to be peace; but north of the Arkansas is General Sheridan,[3] the great war chief, and I do not control him; and he has all the soldiers who are fighting the Arapahoes and Cheyennes. Therefore, you must go back to your country, and if the soldiers come to fight, you must remember they are not from me, but from the great war chief, and with him you must make peace. I am glad to see you and glad to hear that you want peace and not war; I cannot stop the war, but will send your talk to the Great Father, and if he sends me orders to treat you like the

[2]In 1868 the Arkansas River formed the northern boundary of the Cheyenne-Arapaho reservation as stipulated by the Medicine Lodge Treaty. But in order to obtain provisions of beef, flour, coffee, sugar, and salt, the Cheyennes were forced to cross the Arkansas in April 1868 and travel to Fort Larned or Fort Dodge, where the goods were distributed. The distribution of arms and ammunition on August 9 also took place at Fort Larned, and it is assumed that Black Kettle is making reference to these two occasions in his speech. Berthrong 1963, 301, 305.

[3]For information on Sheridan, see chapter 23.

friendly Indians I will send out to you to come in. But you must not come in again unless I send for you, and you must keep well out beyond the friendly Kiowas and Comanches. I am satisfied that you want peace; that it has not been you, but your bad men, that have made the war, and I will do all I can for you to bring peace; then I will go with you and your agent on to your reservation and care for you there. I hope you understand how and why it is that I cannot make peace with you.

All the chiefs present replied that they did.

Recorded by order of Colonel and Brevet Major General W. B. Hazen.

Correct:

Henry E. Alvord,[4]
Captain 10th Cav. A.A.I.G.,
District Indian Territory.

[4]For information on Alvord, see the introduction to chapter 21.

PS#2

WASHITA MEMORIES

Eyewitness Views of Custer's Attack on Black Kettle's Village

compiled and edited by
RICHARD G. HARDORFF

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA PRESS
Norman

6

George A. Custer, Seventh Cavalry

George Armstrong Custer was born on December 5, 1839, in New Rumley, Ohio. After graduation from West Point in 1861, he was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Fifth U.S. Cavalry. His limitless energy, driving ambition, and aggressive attitude earned him a meteoric rise in the volunteer ranks. In 1863, at the age of only twenty-three, Custer was promoted to brigadier general of volunteers and assigned to the Michigan Brigade, which became famous under his leadership. The culmination of his distinguished Civil War career came in 1865, when he was promoted to major general of volunteers and led the Third Cavalry Division from one victory to another. Custer's perceptive faculties, decision of character, dash, and audacity had won him the favor of his superiors and the adulation of the general public, and at the close of the war he was hailed a national hero.

During Reconstruction, Custer commanded a division in the South. He then served in the Department of Texas as chief of cavalry until 1866, when he was mustered out of the volunteer service. In the same year, with Sheridan's help, Custer won appointment as lieutenant colonel of the newly formed Seventh U.S. Cavalry. He participated in the futile Hancock expedition in southwestern Kansas and Indian Territory during the spring of 1867. General Hancock's main accomplishment in this operation was the burning of a vacated Sioux and Cheyenne village, which only escalated the hostilities.

During the summer of 1867, Custer led his regiment on an expedition to the Republican River valley in search of Indians. He soon realized that conventional methods of warfare were no match for the guerrilla tactics of his Indian adversaries. Failing to engage the hos-

tiles, he returned with his regiment to Fort Wallace, then hurriedly departed without permission for cholera-stricken Fort Riley to check on the welfare of his wife. Shortly thereafter he was arrested and court-martialed for leaving his post of duty without authorization, for excessive cruelty and illegal conduct in regards to deserters, for the abandonment of two soldiers attacked by Indians, and for marching his men excessively. Convicted on all counts in November 1867, Custer was sentenced to suspension from the army for one year.

In September 1868 this sentence was remitted at the request of Sheridan. The general had assumed command of the Department of the Missouri and wanted Custer to lead the Seventh Cavalry in a winter campaign against the Cheyennes. This campaign culminated with the Washita attack in November 1868, which established Custer's reputation as an Indian fighter. The following spring he confronted the remainder of the hostile Cheyennes at the Sweetwater in the Texas Panhandle. In stark contrast with his bloody confrontation at the Washita, the colonel gained the release of two white women and the surrender of the tribe without any bloodshed.

Custer served at Fort Hayes and Fort Leavenworth until 1871, when his regiment was ordered to Kentucky. Remaining there until 1873, he and his command then joined Brig. Gen. Stanley's Yellowstone expedition to protect the surveyors of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Afterward the Seventh Cavalry was stationed at Fort Abraham Lincoln in Dakota Territory. In 1874 Custer led his troops on an exploring and mining expedition to the Black Hills, where they discovered gold in the heart of the Sioux reservation. In 1875 the U.S. government attempted to negotiate the sale of the Black Hills, but the Sioux compassionately refused. When some bands refused to comply with a government order to return to the reservation, an punitive expedition was launched in the spring of 1876. The Dakota Column included Custer and the Seventh Cavalry, under the command of Brig. Gen. Alfred Terry. This was to be Custer's last campaign. On June 25 he along with two of his brothers, a brother-in-law, a nephew, and all the men of five troops under his personal command were slain by Sioux and Cheyennes at the Little Bighorn in Montana. The following year the colonel's remains were exhumed from a shallow grave at the battlefield and reinterred with military honors in the post cemetery at West Point.

Custer is adjudged by his contemporaries and biographers as one of the most controversial figures in American history. His admirers find him to be a mixture of unlimited energy and endurance, driving ambition, courage, quick perception, and instant reaction. Yet there was a darker side to him, exposed briefly by his court-martial in 1867. His detractors see him as an immature egotist prone to exaggeration, a reckless glory hunter who showed indifference to the fate of others. Regardless of the flood of adulation on the one hand and the volume of recrimination on the other, today Custer is remembered primarily for his enigmatic death in a disastrous defeat. He wrote a number of articles on his military experiences and was the author of My Life on the Plains, *which in part treats the battle of the Washita.*

The Custer papers gathered below consist of the following four documents: Custer's official report of the Washita battle, dated November 28, 1868; his official report of his return to the battlefield, dated December 22, 1868; a letter to K. C. Barker, president of the Detroit Audubon Club, dated May 26, 1869, in which Custer describes several war trophies taken from the Washita battlefield; and an extract from the Washita chapters in My Life on the Plains.

Official Report
November 28, 1868

Headquarters 7th United States Cavalry,
In the Field, on Washita River,
November 28, 1868.

Major General P. H. Sheridan,
Commanding Department of the Missouri.

General: On the morning of the 26th instant, this command, comprising 11 troops of the 7th Cavalry, struck a trail of an Indian war party, numbering about 100 warriors. The trail was not quite 24 hours old, and was first discovered near the point where the Texas boundary line crosses the Canadian river. The direction was towards the southeast.

The ground being covered by over 12 inches of snow, no difficulty was to be experienced in following the trail. A vigorous pursuit was at once instituted; wagons, tents, and all other impediments to a rapid march were abandoned.

From daylight until nine o'clock at night the pursuit was unchecked; horses and men were then allowed one hour for refreshment, and then at 10 P.M. the march was resumed and continued until 1.30 A.M., when our Osage trailers reported a village within less than a mile from our advance. The column was countermarched and withdrawn to a retired point to prevent discovery.

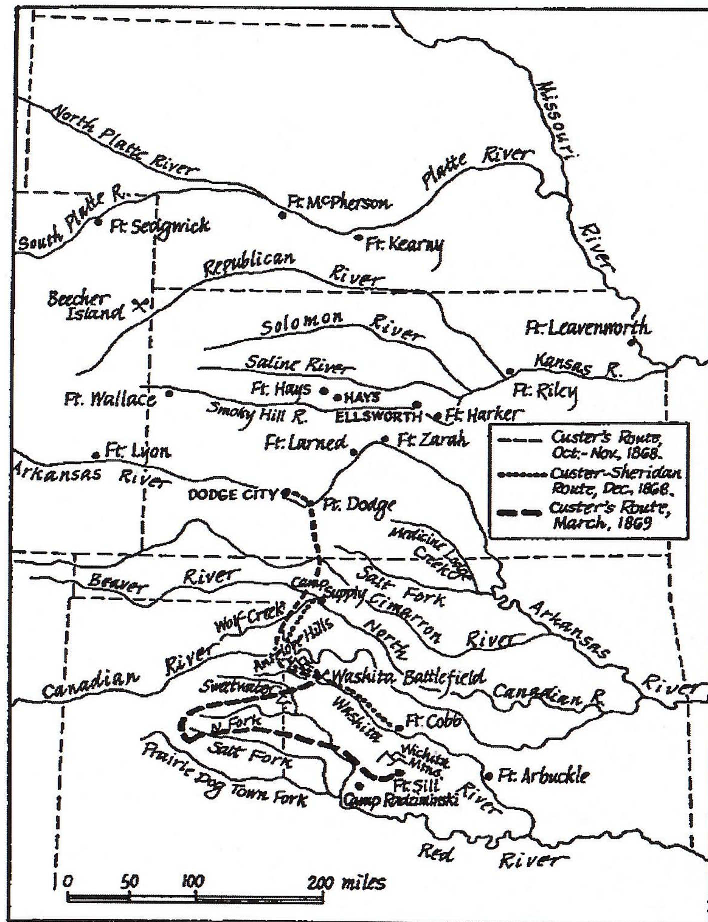
After reconnoitering, with all the officers of the command, the location of the village, which was situated in a strip of heavy timber, I divided the command into four columns of nearly equal strength; the first consisted of three companies, under Major Elliott, was to attack in the timber from below the village; the second column, under Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Myers, was to move down the Washita and attack in the timber from above; Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Thompson, in command of the third column, was to attack from the crest north of the village;[1] while the fourth column was to charge the village from the crest overlooking it on the west bank of the Washita.

The hour at which the four columns were to charge simultaneously was the first dawn of day, and notwithstanding the fact that two of the columns were compelled to march several miles to reach their positions, three of them made the attack so near together as to appear like one charge—the other column was only a few moments late. There never was a more complete surprise. My men charged the village and reached the lodges before the Indians were aware of our presence. The moment the charge was ordered the band struck up "Garry Owen," and with cheers that strongly reminded me of scenes during the war, every trooper, led by his officer, rushed towards the village.

The Indians were caught napping for once. The warriors rushed from their lodges and posted themselves behind trees, and in the deep ravines, from which they began a most determined defence.

The lodges and all their contents were in our possession within 10 minutes after the charge was ordered, but the real fighting, such

[1]Thompson's battalion attacked from the bluffs south of the village.



Routes of the Seventh Cavalry during the Winter Campaign of 1868–1869. Reproduced from George A. Custer's *My Life on the Plains.*

as has rarely if ever been equalled in Indian warfare, began when attempting to clear out or kill the warriors posted in ravines or underbrush; charge after charge was made, and most gallantly, too, but the Indians had resolved to sell their lives as dearly as possible. After a desperate conflict of several hours, our efforts were crowned by a most complete and gratifying success. The entire vil-

lage, numbering 47 lodges of Black Kettle's band of Cheyennes, two lodges of Arapahoes, and two lodges of Sioux—51 lodges in all—under command of their principal chief, Black Kettle, fell into our hands. By actual and careful examination after the battle, the following figures give some of the fruits of our victory: The Indians left on the ground and in our possession the bodies of 103 of their warriors, including Black Kettle himself, whose scalp is now in the possession of our Osage guides. We captured in good condition 875 horses, ponies, and mules, 241 saddles, some of very fine and costly workmanship, 573 buffalo robes, 390 buffalo skins for lodges, 160 untanned robes, 210 axes, 140 hatchets, 35 revolvers, 47 rifles, 535 pounds of powder, 1,050 pounds of lead, 4,000 arrows and arrowheads, 75 spears, 90 bullet moulds, 35 bows and quivers, 12 shields, 300 pounds of bullets, 775 lariats, 940 buckskin saddlebags, 470 blankets, 93 coats, 700 pounds of tobacco. In addition, we captured all their winter supply of buffalo meat, all their meal, flour, and other provisions, and, in fact, everything they possessed, even driving the warriors from the village with little or no clothing.

We destroyed everything of value to the Indians, and have now in our possession, as prisoners of war, 53 squaws and their children. Among the prisoners are the survivors of Black Kettle and the family of Little Rock. We also secured two white children, held captive by the Indians. One white woman who was in their possession was murdered by her captors the moment we attacked. A white boy held captive, about 10 years old, when about to be rescued, was brutally murdered by a squaw, who ripped out his entrails with a knife.[2]

The Kiowas, under Satanta,[3] and Arapahoes, under Little Raven, were encamped six miles below Black Kettle's village; the

[2]In actuality, this was a Cheyenne infant who was killed by his mother out of despair. See chapter 18.

[3]Santanta, or White Bear, was perhaps the most influential of the Kiowa chiefs. Born about 1830, he was a great orator, with a splendid physique and a piercing glance, and had a reputation as a notorious raider with a great fondness for whiskey. He became the leader of a Kiowa faction upon the death of Little Mountain in 1865 and was a signatory to the Medicine Lodge Treaty (1867). His involvement in the torture of seven teamsters of the Henry Warren wagon train in 1871 led to his imprisonment in Texas. Released in 1873 but ignoring the conditions of his parole, he participated in the Red River War and was later arrested and returned to the penitentiary in Huntsville. Satanta committed suicide on October 11, 1878, by jumping headfirst out of a second-story window; he was

warriors from these two villages came to attempt the rescue of the Cheyennes. They attacked my command from all sides about noon, hoping to recover the squaws and herd of the Cheyennes.

In their attack they displayed great boldness, and compelled me to use all my force to repel them, but the counter-charges of the cavalry was more than they could stand; by 3 o'clock we drove them in all directions, pursuing them several miles. I then moved my entire command in search of the villages of the Kiowas and Arapahoes, but after a march of eight miles discovered they had taken alarm at the fate of the Cheyenne village, and had fled.[4]

I was then three day's march from where I had left my train of supplies, and knew that wagons could not follow me, as the trail had led me over a section of country so cut up by ravines and other obstructions that cavalry could with difficulty move over it. The supplies carried from the train on the persons of the men were exhausted; my men, from loss of sleep and hard service, were wearied out; my horses were in the same condition for want of forage; I therefore began my return march about 8 P.M., and found my train of supplies at this point, (it only having accomplished 16 miles since I left it.)

In the excitement of the fight, as well as in self-defence, it so happened that some of the squaws and a few of the children were killed and wounded; the latter I have brought with us, and they receive all the medical attention the circumstances of the case permit. Many of the squaws were taken with arms in their hands, and several of my command are known to have been wounded by them.

The desperate character of the combat may be inferred from the fact that, after the battle, the bodies of 38 dead warriors were

buried in the prison cemetery. The chief was survived by his wife, two daughters, and two sons. Both daughters married Trails the Enemy, a Kiowa scout at Fort Sill. Santana's youngest son, Mark, mustered in L Company, 7th Cavalry, an Indian scout company, while the oldest son became a member of the Indian Police on the reservation. After a long court fight in 1963, the Texas legislature granted a request by Satanta's grandson, James Auchiah, to exhume his grandfather's remains for reinterment in the post cemetery at Fort Sill. Nye 1969, 127, 255–56.

[4]This was an Arapaho village. It was located on the east side of the Washita near where present Highway 33 crosses the river. Although Custer asserts that he advanced as far as this village, Lt. Edward S. Godfrey contradicts this statement. See the extract from Custer's *Life on the Plains* in this chapter and Godfrey's account in chapter 8.

found in a small ravine near the village in which they had posted themselves.

I now have to report the loss suffered by my command. I regret to mention among the killed Major Joel H. Elliott and Captain Louis M. Hamilton, and 19 enlisted men; the wounded includes three officers and 11 enlisted men—in all, 35. Of the officers, Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Albert Barnitz, captain 7th Cavalry, is seriously, if not mortally, wounded; Brevet Lieutenant Colonel T. W. Custer, and Second Lieutenant T. J. March, 7th Cavalry, are slightly wounded. Brevet Lieutenant Colonel F. W. Benteen had his horse shot under him by a son of Black Kettle, whom he afterwards killed. Colonel Barnitz, before receiving his wound, killed two warriors.

I cannot sufficiently commend the admirable conduct of the officers and men.

This command has marched five days amidst terrible snow storms, and over a rough country covered by more than 12 inches of snow. Officers and men have slept in the snow without tents. The night preceding the attack, officers and men stood at their horses' heads for hours, awaiting the moment of attack; this, too, when the temperature was far below the freezing point. They have endured every privation, and fought with unsurpassed gallantry against a powerful and well-armed foe, and from first to last I have not heard a single murmur; but, on the contrary, the officers and men of the several squadrons and companies seemed to vie with each other in their attention to duty, and their patience and perseverance under difficulties.

Every officer, man, scout, and Indian guide, did their full duty. I only regret the loss of the gallant spirits who fell in the "battle of the Washita." Those whose loss we are called upon to deplore were among our bravest and best.

Respectfully submitted:

G. A. Custer,
Lieutenant Colonel 7th Cavalry, Bvt. Maj. Gen. U.S.A.

SECONDARY SOURCES

SS#1

Black Kettle

The Cheyenne Chief Who Sought Peace but Found War

Thom Hatch

John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

8

THE SAND CREEK MASSACRE

THE FROSTY PRE-DAWN OF NOVEMBER 29, 1864, BROUGHT THE promise of another tranquil day to the Southern Cheyenne camp nestled within the arcing north bank of Sand Creek, at a point known as Big South Bend. The buffalo-hide lodges—more than 100, which were home to about 500 of Black Kettle's people, and 10 lodges with 50 Arapaho under Chief Left Hand—were arranged in the traditional circle that spread over a half mile in diameter, broken only by an opening that faced the rising sun. Nearby, beyond a scattering of cottonwood and willow that grew along the bend, grazed a sizable horse herd, in addition to another smaller herd below the camp.[1]

The People had been reassured by Black Kettle's recent trip to Fort Lyon that they would be safe and secure in this remote place, far away from the militant Dog Soldier camps on the Smoky Hill, where the soldiers were more likely to attack. After months of living with the fear that soldiers would appear without warning and, at the least, destroy all their possessions and the stores that had been gathered for the winter, they could now seek contentment and raise their families in peace.

The men remained inside the lodges, wrapped snugly in warm buffalo robes on this chilly morning, while the women went about their morning chores. Campfires had been kept burning throughout the cold night and were now replenished in preparation for the morning meal. The women paid a visit to the creek to draw fresh water—yesterday's water was dead and was emptied out in favor of living water. Pleasant greetings and children's chatter could be heard as they dipped their containers into the faint trickle of flowing water or into one of the small, ice-crusted puddles in this mostly dry creek bed.

The serenity of the moment ended abruptly when the natural rhythm of the day was interrupted by a rumbling noise that emanated from beyond the eastern horizon. The startled women hurried back to camp to spread the word—buffalo! That distinct pounding of hooves must indicate that a herd of buffalo was approaching. The entire village was roused. Men, women, and children burst from the lodges with great anticipation of viewing this welcome sight.

Those oncoming hooves, however, did not belong to buffalo but to cavalry horses, about 750 strong, and they carried soldiers to the threshold of Black Kettle's camp.

The Cheyenne initially watched with great curiosity as this large force of horsemen materialized within the distant haze. Curiosity gradually changed to apprehension, although no one shouted an alarm for them to flee or encouraged the warriors to retrieve their weapons and prepare to fight.

John S. Smith and his son Jack, Ed Guerrier, Watson Clark, and Private David Lauderback, who were camped upstream from Black Kettle's lodge, were roused and asked to go find out what the soldiers wanted. The women, however, had driven the horses away from camp at first sight of the soldiers. So the Smiths and Lauderback walked down toward the lower part of the village, the direction from which the soldiers approached.

Black Kettle had called for someone to bring him the longest lodge pole in the camp. He then hurried inside his lodge and emerged with a large American flag. This particular flag had been presented to him four years earlier by Commissioner of Indian Affairs A. B. Greenwood, who had told the chief to display it should soldiers approach, that it would be respected as a symbol of peace. The chief attached the flag to the top of the pole and for good measure added a smaller white flag beneath. Black Kettle hoisted the lodge pole as high as possible so that "Old Glory" rose well above the tops of the lodges. He waved it back and forth to make it highly conspicuous to the soldiers.[2]

By this time, many interested people from within the camp had congregated around Black Kettle's lodge, perhaps seeking safe haven under the American flag. These soldiers must merely be passing by in their search for hostiles, Black Kettle told them, and they would go away after determining that this was the place that the officers at Fort Lyon had designated that friendly Indians remain under military protection. The chief stood holding the sturdy pole, the flags rustling

gently in the cool breeze, high in the air, where they could be seen for some distance.[3]

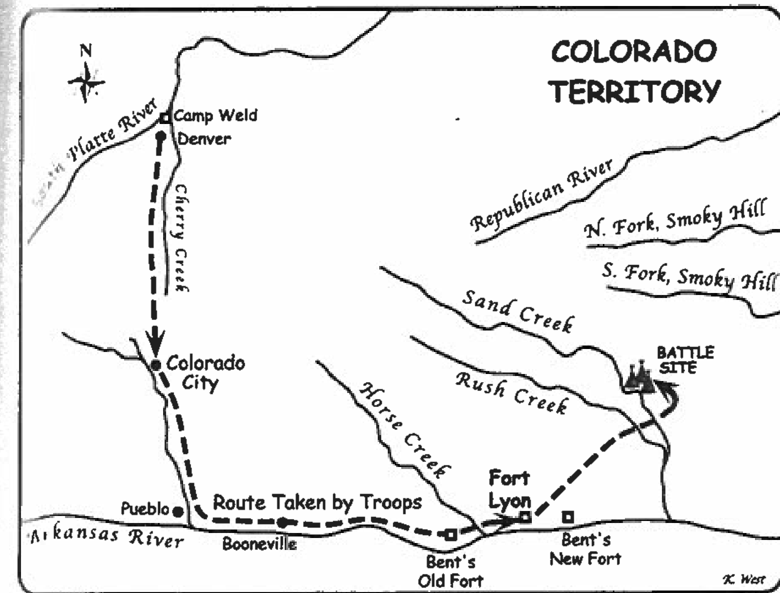
In spite of Black Kettle's assurances, the calm and the contentment of the camp were replaced by a shroud of anxiety, as this potential storm of violence loomed on the horizon. Within moments, the troops would reveal the reason for their presence, and life for Black Kettle and his peaceful Southern Cheyenne band would never be the same.

These particular troops that were assembled within a mile of Black Kettle's camp were primarily members of the 3rd Colorado Cavalry, with elements of the 1st Colorado Cavalry, commanded by Colonel John M. Chivington. The unit could best be described as a ragtag group of farmers, miners, shopkeepers, ranchers, gamblers, adventurers, and assorted ruffians. Many of these men had signed up after the August 11 plea by Governor Evans for recruits. They had been called the "Bloodless Third" because it was assumed that the term of their enlistment would expire before they had engaged in a meaningful battle with hostile Indians. The colonel, however, did not intend to disappoint his men, who were anxious to prove themselves in battle.

Chivington, under a cloak of secrecy to conceal his movements from the Indians and their sympathizers, had mustered his troops under Colonel George L. Shoup and issued marching orders for November 14. His intended destination for the 3rd Cavalry, revealed to only a handful of trusted subordinates, was Fort Lyon to the southeast—and the nearby Southern Cheyenne camp at Sand Creek.

Colonel Shoup had led the 3rd Cavalry, plus two companies of the 1st Colorado, from Bijou Basin eastward through bitter cold and drifting snow until reaching the Arkansas River, where the ground was nearly bare. Chivington, who had brought along four additional companies of the 3rd and 1st Colorado, assumed command on November 23 at Spring Bottom near Booneville (present-day Boone), twenty miles east of Pueblo. The column was also met at that point by Jim Beckwourth, the renowned sixty-nine-year-old mulatto trapper and hunter, who would serve as guide.[4]

The overbearing Colonel Chivington, contemptuous of any authority other than his own, had not even informed Brigadier General Curtis at headquarters in Kansas of his campaign, perhaps for fear of being denied permission. Curtis, however, would have certainly applauded the colonel's secret mission. Without knowing of Chivington's plans, Curtis had written to his aide stating that even if the Southern



Chivington's march to Sand Creek

Cheyennes and the Southern Arapahoes presented themselves at Fort Lyon seeking peace, the military was not obligated to accept them. "At the proper time," Curtis wrote, "a campaign would be undertaken against the hostiles, and to assure its success, the march of the troops would be masked from the view of the public."[5]

Chivington, as if reading the mind of General Curtis, was aware that most major operations failed due to the Indians gaining knowledge that the army had taken to the field, which enabled them to escape before the troops arrived. He was determined not to make that mistake.

Patrols were dispatched along the way to visit outlying ranches, where the soldiers, without explanation, disarmed and detained the occupants to ensure that no one could warn the Indians about Chivington's march. These innocent people were placed under guard for up to three days, not even being permitted to tend to their livestock, many of which wandered off. Travelers and stagecoaches were stopped, until the only movement along that stretch of the Arkansas River was the Colorado cavalry.[6]

Chivington, therefore, was furious when on the morning of November 28 a detail from Fort Lyon under Captain Silas Soule rode out to meet him when his cavalry had ventured to within about ten miles of the fort. Soule assured Chivington that his arrival at Fort Lyon had not been expected, and that the captain had only learned about the presence of the troops a few minutes earlier from an old mule skinner who had been riding ahead of Chivington's column, close enough to recognize the colonel but without being observed by the troops.[7]

Chivington was concerned that the mule driver would alert others along his route or those camped around the fort. The colonel and Major Jacob Downing, his aide, raced ahead of the column to take measures that would prevent any security lapses. The two officers arrived at the fort, pleased that they had indeed caught everyone by surprise, and Chivington immediately issued orders for a perimeter to be established around the entire area. No one, without exception, could leave, and those who dared disobey would face death.

The cavalry column arrived near Fort Lyon at about noon and bivouacked a half mile away. The soldiers were given strict orders to stay in camp, fires after dark were prohibited, and anyone who contacted the Indians would be considered a spy and shot.[8]

Chivington informed Major Scott Anthony, the post commander, that he intended to march that night and attack Black Kettle's camp at Sand Creek, some forty miles to the northeast. Anthony enthusiastically supported the plan but recommended that friendly Indians and three white men—Smith, Clark, and Lauderback—who were present in the camp be spared. Anthony also stated that Chief One Eye, who was on the payroll as an informant, as well as the friendly chiefs Left Hand and Black Kettle, should be removed from the camp before the attack.[9]

The colonel bristled when the name "Black Kettle" was mentioned. He said,

> Black Kettle is the principal chief of the Cheyenne nation, which has been engaged in bloody war with the whites since April. His claim of friendship seems to have arisen with the ending of the summer season and the approach of cold weather when Indians fight at a disadvantage. However, it is not my intention to attack without warning. Actual operations must, of course, depend on conditions which we find on arrival, but I propose to first immobilize the Indians, if possible, and then to offer them a parley on terms of surrender. Such terms would include the delivering up for punishment of all savages guilty of hostilities, the return of all stolen property, the surrender of all firearms and the giving of hostages to insure against further hostilities.[10]

This statement contradicted remarks that Chivington had made on the ride to Fort Lyon, when he had said, "Scalps are what we're after," and "I long to be wading in gore."[11]

Apparently, Anthony was satisfied with Chivington's explanation, and the conversation concluded with the major promising his services and that of a battalion from the fort consisting of 125 officers and men.

Marching orders were issued for eight o'clock that night. Each man was given several pounds of bacon and sufficient hardtack to last three or four days and was instructed that only gear that could be packed into saddlebags could be taken along. This would be a quick march—the supply train would remain at the fort—and it was imperative that they travel as light as possible.

While preparations for the march were under way, behind-the-scenes opposition to the campaign was mounting. Not every officer at the fort agreed with Chivington and Anthony that an attack on Black Kettle's village was justified under any circumstances. A number of these officers had accompanied Major Edward Wynkoop into hostile Cheyenne territory to arrange Black Kettle's peaceful surrender, and all of them had signed the letter that the major was delivering to headquarters, attesting to the fact that Black Kettle's Southerners desired peace. Now they were being told that they would be obliged to attack this friendly camp.

Wynkoop, although subsequently deposed as the commander of Fort Lyon, had guaranteed the safety of these Indians at Sand Creek until the time when General Curtis would provide provisions for a peace treaty. Black Kettle and his band had acted in good faith and were peacefully camped at Sand Creek, awaiting Curtis's decision. That being that case, it appeared that Chivington had taken matters into his own hands without consulting a higher authority, which was contrary to the pledge of safety given Black Kettle. This pending betrayal was an affront to the honor of each officer who had been with Wynkoop.

Throughout the day, the discussion around Fort Lyon was dominated by officers who voiced objections to this campaign. The only

course of action for honorable men, it was decided, would be for the officers to attempt to dissuade Chivington from making this grievous mistake. No one, however, had as yet summoned the nerve to directly confront the intimidating colonel.

Captain Silas Soule sought an audience with Major Scott Anthony. The twenty-six-year-old Soule reminded his commander that both he and the major had promised to carry out Wynkoop's pledge. Soule had expected that Anthony would support the objections of the officers and speak with Chivington. Instead, Soule was surprised and disappointed when Anthony responded by saying that "he was in for killing all Indians, and that he was only acting or had been only acting friendly with them until he could get a force large enough to go out and kill all of them."

Word of this conversation reached Chivington, who predictably became livid with anger. Soule had fought beside the colonel at La Glorieta Pass and had been one of his most trusted officers, as well as a personal friend. That relationship, however, was now in the past. Chivington went as far as to make indirect threats against the life of Captain Soule for questioning the legitimacy of this campaign. Soule was warned by several fellow officers to stay away from the colonel, but he would not be completely deterred from trying to make his feelings known. He sent a note to Chivington, but it was returned unopened.[12]

Another of the more outspoken officers was Lieutenant Joseph Cramer. The lieutenant told Major Anthony that he believed that the officers who had accompanied Wynkoop to Smoky Hill and had signed the letter would perjure themselves as both officers and men if they participated in an attack and, furthermore, that it would be murder to kill the Indians in Black Kettle's camp.

Anthony assured Cramer that "Black Kettle would not be killed; that it was a promise given by Colonel Chivington that Black Kettle and his friends would be spared; that the object of the expedition was to surround the camp and take the stolen stock and kill the Indians that had been committing depredations during the last spring and summer."[13]

Cramer was not convinced that this was an accurate portrayal of Chivington's intentions. The lieutenant decided that the only way to settle the matter was to confront the quick-tempered colonel. The courageous Cramer did just that, stating to Chivington that killing

Black Kettle would be nothing less than murder and that "you are placing us in a very embarrassing circumstance."[14]

Chivington listened to the lieutenant in silence, then exploded in anger, waving his meaty fist and shouting, "The Cheyenne nation has been waging bloody war against the whites all spring, summer, and fall, and Black Kettle is their principal chief! I believe it right and honorable to use any means under God's heaven to kill Indians who kill and torture women and children! Damn any man who is in sympathy with them!" Chivington turned on his heel and, as he strode from the room, added that any officer or man who sympathized with the Indians should resign from the army.[15]

As evening approached, one final effort to reason with Chivington was made in person by Lieutenants C. M. Cossitt, J. S. Maynard, and W. P. Minton, the Indian agent Sam Colley, Captain Samuel H. Cook, and several civilians who lived at Fort Lyon. They argued that the consensus opinion was that these "Indians were recognized as friendly by all parties of this post." Colley, perhaps with a guilty conscience, pointed out that Black Kettle's Southern Cheyenne had been misrepresented and maltreated, and that it would be a crime to attack them after they had been promised protection. The others affirmed Colley's sentiments and respectfully requested that the colonel reconsider his plans.

Chivington had paced around the room during this tense meeting, glaring at those who dared to defy him, his temper escalating with each challenge to his supreme authority. He had not prepared his troops for battle and ridden all the way from Denver to be insulted by a bunch of whining Indian-lovers over a mission that he fervently believed was God's will. The colonel abruptly concluded the meeting by once again declaring, "Damn any man who is in sympathy with an Indian!"[16]

There would be no last-minute reprieve for Black Kettle and his Southern Cheyennes who were camped at Sand Creek. Their fate was now in the hands of John Milton Chivington, whose misguided ambition and absolute power gave him the authority to rewrite the rules of legal, ethical, and military propriety as he saw fit.

The Fort Lyon officers, however, rode with the understanding that the lives of Black Kettle and the other peace chiefs would be spared, that the mission of the operation was to surround the Sand Creek village, recover stolen stock, and arrest or perhaps punish the few inhabitants who may have been responsible for committing acts of violence

against whites. With that accomplished, the column would head up the Smoky Hill River and attack the Dog Soldier village, which was known to be out raiding.[17]

At eight o'clock that night, Chivington formed his command for the march to Sand Creek. This column of Indian hunters consisted of about 700 to 750 troops—including the 125 officers and men from the post garrison—divided into 5 battalions under Lieutenant Colonel Leavitt L. Bowen, Major Scott J. Anthony, Major Hal Sayr, Captain T. G. Cree, and Lieutenant Luther Wilson. Four pieces of artillery—12-pound mountain howitzers—would be under the direction of Bowen. Major Jacob Downing and Captain A. J. Gill would serve as aides to Chivington.[18]

Private Irving Howbert of Company G, 3rd Cavalry, remembered the march to Sand Creek: "Each company was formed in ranks of fours, and we traveled rapidly from the start. It was walk, trot, gallop, dismount and lead, all night long. It was a bright, clear, starlight night, the air crisp and uncomfortably cool, as might have been expected at that time of year."[19]

Howbert's description of conditions that night was an understatement. In fact, the air was so cold during the march that the guide Jim Beckwourth became incapacitated and was replaced by Robert Bent, one of the mixed-blood sons of William Bent and Owl Woman. Black Kettle's village was home to Robert's brother George and three sisters. Accordingly, Chivington kept a close eye on his guide. At one point, when the colonel thought that Bent might have been leading the column astray, he warned, "I haven't had an Indian to eat in a long time. If you fool with me, and don't lead us to that camp, I'll have you for breakfast."[20]

At daybreak, Chivington and Shoup, riding in the advance, topped a rise and, about a mile away, observed Black Kettle's camp on the far banks of Sand Creek. The two officers could hear the sound of barking dogs and view a flurry of activity within the camp which indicated that their presence was known. Chivington understood that he must act without delay. This would be the victory that would elevate him to the status of national hero, and he was not about to let it slip from his grasp.

Contrary to his promise to surround the village and seek the surrender of the friendly Indians, which could have been accomplished by sending a detail into the camp with or without a white flag, the colonel did not waste any time deploying his troops into battle formation.

The Sand Creek Massacre, November 29, 1864

Lieutenant Luther Wilson, with Companies C, E, and F of the 1st Colorado, was sent by Chivington across the creek to the north to strike between the village and the large horse herd. When a number of warriors ran to save their horses, Wilson ordered his men to dismount and assume a position in the creek bed northeast of the camp. He gave the order to fire into the advancing Indians, and the ensuing fusillade successfully thwarted the attempt by the Cheyenne to reach the herd. These soldiers then formed a skirmisher line and fired at will into the village.

Major Anthony, with three companies, had thundered across the creek behind Wilson and halted just southeast of the camp to lay

down a base of fire. Chivington positioned his artillery near the creek bank, and the powerful guns immediately began firing grape and canister shot into the helpless village. Several detachments in succession were dispatched in a maneuver to encircle and assault the camp from various directions, while the remainder of the men advanced on foot across the creek bed, directly toward their objective.

Chivington rallied his men by shouting, "Remember the murdered women and children on the Platte! Take no prisoners!"[21]

George Bent described these initial moments: "I looked toward the chief's lodge and saw that Black Kettle had a large American flag tied to the end of a long lodgepole and was standing in front of his lodge, holding the pole, with the flag fluttering in the grey light of the winter dawn. I heard him call to the people not to be afraid, that the soldiers would not hurt them; then the troops opened fire from two sides of the camps."[22]

Black Kettle, with the assistance of Chief White Antelope, stood by his lodge and continued to wave the American flag, resolute in his belief that their safety had been guaranteed. The barrage of bullets that poured into the camp, however, served as evidence that the army had no intention of honoring the promise of protection.

Finally, the people who had gathered around Black Kettle's lodge could no longer stand passively by in the face of the vicious onslaught. They scattered in utter confusion, not knowing which direction to run, the fire from the soldiers cutting off every avenue of escape.

One of those who ran for his life was George Bent, who said that at this point, "The women and children were screaming and wailing, the men running to their lodges for their arms and shouting advice to one another."

Black Kettle, however, remained standing in front of his lodge, waving the flag in a futile attempt to stop the bloodshed.[23]

The trader and interpreter John S. Smith, wearing an army overcoat and a broad-brimmed hat, had approached to within thirty yards of the soldiers with the belief that he would be recognized. He indeed was noticed and identified. Shouts from Chivington's men rang out, "Shoot the old son-of-a-bitch! He's no better than an Indian!" Smith dashed back to seek refuge from the wrath of the soldiers in Chief War Bonnet's lodge.[24]

Seventy-five-year-old Chief White Antelope, wearing around his neck a medal given to him by President Abraham Lincoln, had grown

anxious and headed toward the soldiers, waving his arms and exhorting them in English not to fire. Black Kettle called out to his friend, telling him to come back, that his efforts would be in vain. But White Antelope's heart was heavy with the realization that they had been betrayed by the white man, and he no longer wanted to live. The chief finally halted and stood at the creek bed, his arms folded across his chest to signify that he did not want to fight, and chanted his death song:

> Nothing lives long
> Except the earth and the mountains

White Antelope was cut down by a hail of bullets. The soldiers scalped him and cut off his ears and nose—as well as his scrotum, from which the violator was said to have bragged that he would make a tobacco pouch.[25]

The soldiers poured murderous, indiscriminate fire into the panic-stricken Indians, and cannon shells rained down on the village. Colonel Shoup's men charged directly toward the lodges, shooting down the vulnerable, fleeing Indians. A group of warriors armed mostly with bows and arrows attempted to hold off Shoup but were soon routed by devastating explosions of grape and canister shot.

The determined blue-clad troops, whose actions now resembled a mob, then commenced a raid into the lodges, killing great numbers of men, women, and children and riddling those who were already dead with bullets. Wounded Indians, many of them women and children, crawled toward the creek, marking their trail with blood and bodies, as one by one, the soldiers mercilessly put them out of their misery.

The Arapaho chief Left Hand had vowed to never fight against the white man and, true to his word, remained in front of his lodge in the midst of the carnage, reminding anyone who would listen that he was peaceful. Several reports indicated that the chief had been killed, but his body was not found on the field. It has been speculated that he escaped, then from that day forward vanished from the pages of history.[26]

About a hundred Cheyennes—perhaps thirty men, the rest women and children—raced from the camp in a desperate attempt to seek refuge in the six- to ten-foot-high, almost perpendicular banks of the

dry creek bed about two miles above the village. The soldiers followed these people, and many of them were struck by bullets during this mad dash and fell dead or severely wounded. Those who managed to reach that point safely began scooping out the loose sand to make rifle pits for cover, with driftwood as barricades. The outnumbered warriors organized a stiff defense, while protecting the women and children who cowered nearby in the crude trenches.[27]

The soldier Amos Miksch, of the 1st Colorado Cavalry, recalled, "There were no rifle pits except what the Indians dug into the sand bank after we commenced firing. I saw them digging out sand with their hands, while the firing was going on; the water came into the trenches as they dug in this manner."[28]

Black Kettle had waited in front of his lodge until everyone else had fled, then, with wife, Medicine Woman Later, at his side, started northward up the creek bed to join those who were frantically digging defensive positions into the sandy banks. Groups of soldiers were rushing to attack that creek bank, and Black Kettle and his wife became prime targets for their rifles. The couple dashed through a gauntlet of bullets and an obstacle course of dead and dying bodies, until finally Medicine Woman Later fell to the ground and lay unmoving.

Black Kettle stopped and knelt beside his wife, but she appeared to be dead. Reluctantly, knowing that if he remained at her side he would die, Black Kettle continued up the creek, with the soldiers constantly firing at him, and took shelter in the pits where his people were fighting in a desperate attempt to keep the soldiers at bay.[29]

Most of the Cheyenne who had managed to reach the creek bank had been wounded along the way but refused to surrender their lives without a fight; they burrowed into their hastily dug holes to mount a fierce defense. For some of the wounded, the cold temperatures temporarily saved their lives by freezing their wounds, which kept them from bleeding to death. Black Kettle, whose eyes were failing him, accepted the task of reloading weapons for the younger warriors who were able enough to shoot.[30]

George Bent, who had been severely wounded by a bullet in his hip as he scrambled to the refuge in the creek bank, described events at this only organized line of defense: "The soldiers concentrated their fire on the people in the pits and we fought back as well as we could with guns and bows, but we had only a few guns. The troops did not rush in and fight hand to hand, but once or twice after they

up the work, killing the wounded and the women and the children that had not been hurt."[31]

While a great number of Chivington's troops assailed Black Kettle and the Cheyennes trapped in the creek bank, the village and the surrounding area had become the scene of the most heinous atrocities imaginable. Groups of soldiers roamed about in a state of frenzied bloodlust, killing and torturing the wounded and scalping and mutilating the dead—committing merciless acts on women and children, who screamed and pled for mercy, to the extent that many of their comrades became physically ill at the sight of this barbarity.[32]

Private David Lauderback eventually made personal contact with Chivington, who called the private by name and told him to join the command. Soon after, John S. Smith peeked out of War Bonnet's lodge and hailed the colonel. Chivington called out, "Run here, Uncle John; you are all right." Smith brought with him the teamster Watson Clark and Charles Bent, who also fell in with the soldiers as they moved up the stream. Smith would soon return to the camp in order to protect his wife and child, who were hiding in Chief War Bonnet's lodge. By this time, that chief, known for making the first raid into Mexico, had died at the hands of the bloodthirsty soldiers.[33]

Smith had observed the battle from several parts of the camp and attested to the atrocities committed by the soldiers: "All manner of depredations were inflicted . . . they were scalped, their brains knocked out; the men used their knives, ripped open women, clubbed little children, knocked them in the head with their guns, beat their brains out, mutilated their bodies in every sense of the word. . . . children two and three months old; all ages lying there, from sucking infants up to warriors."[34]

Testimony from other participants and eyewitnesses was equally as horrifying.

Major Scott J. Anthony, who later reluctantly admitted to seeing some bodies that were mutilated, also reported, "There was one little child, probably three years old, just big enough to walk through the sand. The Indians had gone ahead, and this little child was behind following after them. I saw one man get off his horse, at a distance of about 75 yards, and draw up his rifle and fired—he missed the child. Another man came up and said, "Let me try the son of a bitch; I can hit him." He got down off his horse, kneeled down and fired at the child, but he missed him. A third man came up and made a similar remark, and the little fellow dropped."[35]

First Lieutenant James D. Cannon related that "I did not see a body of man, woman, or child but was scalped, and in many instances their bodies were mutilated in the most horrible manner—men, women, and children's privates cut out, &c; I heard one man say that he had cut out a woman's private parts and had them for exhibition on a stick."[36]

Robert Bent, the brother of George, had been forced to guide Chivington's troops to Black Kettle's village. He later told government investigators about several instances that he had witnessed during the battle: "Some thirty or forty squaws and children collected in a hole for protection. [They] sent out a little girl about six years old with a white flag on a stick. She had not proceeded but a few steps when she was shot and killed. I saw a little girl who had been hid in the sand. Two soldiers drew their pistols and shot her, then pulled her out of the sand by the arm. I saw quite a number of infants in arms killed with their mothers."[37]

Robert Bent also related that he saw a pregnant woman, who fell behind the others as they ran for the stream bed. She was overtaken by the soldiers, who killed her, then cut open her stomach and yanked out her unborn baby, which was tossed down on the ground beside her.[38]

Robert's brother George wrote, "One old woman who had been scalped by the soldiers walked about, but unable to see where to go. Her entire scalp had been taken and the skin of her forehead fell down over her eyes."[39]

Remembrances of Cheyenne victims are equally troubling. One woman told about how when the soldiers attacked, she slung the cradle-board holding her baby onto her back and grabbed hold of her little boy's hand. She tried to escape the onslaught by running toward the creek bed, with bullets zipping all around her. Finally, this woman was struck in the shoulder but managed to hide herself and her children along the sandy bank. She removed the cradle-board from her back, only to discover that her baby had been shot through the body and was dead. Her husband also died that day.[40]

Another woman, Black Bear's wife, was struck by a bullet in the face, which damaged her appearance so badly that she was thereafter known as One Eye Comes Together. She lived, however, to tell about the soldiers killing women and children and grabbing women, who struggled to free themselves while the soldiers brutally raped them.

When the soldiers had finished raping a woman, they simply shot her in an attempt to conceal their crime. Yet enough women survived to testify that this practice was not isolated but quite common.[41]

These acts of brutality and outrage, too numerous to cite item by item, were rampant throughout the village. Other typical examples were: "A group of soldiers paused amid the firing to take turns profaning the body of a comely young squaw, very dead. Indians' fingers were hacked away to get their rings as souvenirs. One soldier trotted about with a heart impaled on a stick. Others carried off the genitals of braves. Someone had the notion that it would be artistic work to slice away the breasts of the Indian women. One breast was worn as a cap, another was seen stretched across the bow of a saddle."[42]

One detachment of Chivington's troops that did not participate in the atrocities or even in the battle was Company D of the 1st Colorado Cavalry, commanded by Captain Silas S. Soule. Upon arrival at Black Kettle's camp, Soule, who had already voiced his opposition to killing Indians he deemed friendly, had determined that the lodges were occupied mainly by women and children. He implored Chivington not to attack but was ordered back to his post to do his duty as a soldier.

Instead, Soule ordered his men not to fire. He moved his company to the south end of the village, positioned between other troops and the fleeing Cheyenne, where they sat and watched the actions of their comrades.

Soule wrote a letter dated December 14 to Major Ned Wynkoop, in which he summarized the events surrounding the attack. It reads in part:

> I tell you Ned it was hard to see little children on their knees have their brains beat out by men professing to be civilized. One squaw was wounded and a fellow took a hatchet to finish her, she held her arms up to defend her, and he cut one arm off, and held the other with one hand and dashed the hatchet through her brain. One squaw with her two children, were on their knees, begging for their lives of a dozen soldiers, within ten feet of them all firing—when one succeeded in hitting the squaw in the thigh, when she took a knife and cut the throats of both children, and then killed herself. One old squaw hung herself in the lodge—there was not enough room for her to hang and she held up her knees and choked herself to death. Some tried to escape on the Prairie, but most of them were run down by horsemen. White Antelope, War Bonnet and a

> number of others had Ears and Privates cut off. Squaws [privates] were cut out for trophies. You would think it impossible for white men to butcher and mutilate human beings as they did there, but every word I have told you is the truth, which they do not deny.[43]

Chivington, who later preferred charges against Soule, called his former friend "a coward and a deserter in time of battle, [an officer] who abandoned his leadership post, disobeyed lawful orders of his superiors, refused to fight when the battle got underway, and—in fact—threw down his weapon and ran from the scene of the battle."[44]

Soule's testimony against Chivington at the congressional hearings would be perhaps the most damning evidence heard.

Another officer who apparently did not take part in the fighting was Lieutenant Joseph A. Cramer. Soule remarked in his letter that he, Soule, had been threatened with being cashiered from the service and added, "I think they will try the same for Cramer for he had shot his mouth off a good deal, and did not shoot his pistol off in the Massacre. Joe has behaved himself first rate during this whole affair."[45]

Cramer also wrote a letter to Wynkoop to offer his observations. It reads, in part,

> Bucks, women and children scalped, fingers cut off to get the rings on them, and this as much with officers as men, and one of those officers a Major: and a Lt. Col. cut off Ears, of all he came across, a squaw ripped open and a child taken from her, little children shot, while begging for their lives (and all the indignities shown their bodies that ever was heard of) (women shot while on their knees, with their arms around soldiers begging for their lives.) things that Indians would be ashamed to do. To give you some idea, squaws were known to kill their own children, and then themselves, rather than to have them taken prisoners.

The only lieutenant colonel who was with the command was Lieutenant Colonel Leavitt L. Bowen. The major who was mentioned could have been William F. Wilder, Hal Sayre, Samuel L. Logan, or Scott Anthony.

After listing several chiefs, including Black Kettle, who had been killed, Cramer added, "Black Kettle said when he saw us coming, that he was glad, for it was Major Wynkoop coming to make peace . . . after all the pledges made by Major A[nthony]—to these Indians and then to take the course he did. I think as comments are necessary from me; only I will say he has a face for every man he talks."[46]

There can be no doubt that Chivington, although perhaps not actively participating in the atrocities, was aware of the butchery that took place around him.

The Indian agent Samuel G. Colley later said: "Colonel Chivington did, on the morning of the 29th of November, surprise and attack said camp of friendly Indians and massacre a large number of them, mostly women and children, and did allow the troops of his command to mangle and mutilate them in the most horrible manner."[47]

No evidence exists to indicate that Chivington encouraged his command to satiate their bloodlust with such barbarity, but he certainly could have prevented it. The colonel likely viewed their actions as a reward for this decisive victory that they had handed him.

Meanwhile, Black Kettle and the Cheyennes who manned the rifle pits in the creek bank two miles above the camp refused to yield to the mass of troops that had for hours maintained a steady assailment of rifle fire into their position. At one point, the soldiers were able to move within firing range at the upper end of the pits and killed about thirty people—men, women, and children. This battle of wills, with the Indians vowing to fight to the death, would prove to be a hollow, yet moral, victory for the Cheyennes.[48]

It was about 5 p.m., sundown on this frosty autumn day, when the soldiers finally wearied of their assault on the rifle pits upstream and began to straggle back to Black Kettle's village with their comrades, who were busily looting the lodges.

According to George Bent, after the troops had withdrawn, the surviving Cheyennes, perhaps thirty of the hundred who had initially sought refuge, remained in their pits for some time, afraid that the soldiers would return. "At last we crawled out of the holes, stiff and sore, with the blood frozen on our wounded and half-naked bodies. Slowly and painfully we retreated up the creek, men, women, and children dragging themselves along, the women and children wailing and crying, but not too loudly for they feared the return of the whites."[49]

Black Kettle, however, did not accompany his people as they made their way up the creek bed to seek safety. His thoughts were of Medicine Woman Later. He had witnessed the brutality of the soldiers, the mutilations and the scalping, and could not bear to live with the thought that his wife had been victimized in such a manner. The chief ignored the pleas from his people to join them in their escape and headed alone back toward the place where he had last seen Medicine

Woman Later. He would take his wife's body away and bury her where the soldiers could not find her.

Black Kettle could hear the distant shouts and the commotion as the soldiers looted the lodges and the bodies—taking scalps, cutting off fingers and ears for the jewelry, slicing off pieces of flesh, cutting the long tresses off the women, and collecting Cheyenne personal possessions left in the lodges to save as keepsakes.[50]

He knew that the dead bodies of scores of his people—perhaps more than 150, two-thirds of them women and children—lay strewn about the vicinity of his camp, among them Chiefs White Antelope, Standing Water, War Bonnet, Spotted Crow, Two Thighs, Bear Man, Yellow Shield, Yellow Wolf—as well as the informant One Eye. And the chief was keenly aware that his name would be added to that list, that he would go to live with the spirits, should his presence become known to the soldiers who roamed about searching for someone else to kill.

Chivington would later claim that his men had killed between 400 and 600 Indians that day at Sand Creek. George Bent stated that 137 Indians—28 men and the remainder women and children—had lost their lives. Bent later amended those figures to 53 men and 110 women and children killed. Ed Guerrier, Bent's brother-in-law, set that figure at 148—60 of them men. By contrast, the soldiers lost 10 killed and 38 wounded.[51]

Black Kettle continued moving cautiously ahead, his old, aching legs protesting with each step. He paused now and then in this field of gory, abused corpses, straining in the dim light to recognize that one special person.

At last he found her. Medicine Woman Later was covered with blood and riddled with bullet holes, but she had not been scalped or otherwise mutilated. He lowered himself to the ground beside her and was astonished when a moan escaped from her lips. Her breath was ragged and her heartbeat faint, but, miraculously, Medicine Woman Later was alive.

Black Kettle tenderly lifted his wife onto his back and hastily retraced his route along the creek bed. He carried her through the maze of bodies, past the abandoned rifle pits, until finally overtaking the small group of survivors that was steadily moving away from the soldiers. Several horses had been rounded up, and the chief placed Medicine Woman Later onto the back of one of them.[52]

Black Kettle's band of beaten, wounded Cheyenne then resumed the journey up the creek for perhaps as many as ten miles. The night

was bitter cold and a brisk wind raked across the land with a vengeance. When they lacked the endurance to go any farther, they halted in a ravine on the barren plain, without shelter or wood to build a fire.

The men and women who had not been severely wounded immediately set to work trying save the lives of their companions. When the soldiers had attacked, most people were forced to flee their lodges without time to adequately dress and were half-naked. Clothing, buffalo robes, and blankets belonging to the healthy were used to cover the wounded. Prairie grass was painstakingly collected by hand and heaped on top of freezing bodies for warmth. Piles of grass were ignited to make small, quick-burning fires, and the wounded were placed nearby.

Black Kettle believed that others had also escaped from the village and were now wandering about, lost, wounded, and freezing. Throughout the night, his people called out into the darkness to alert any fellow tribe members who may have been within earshot of their location. Several of them straggled in to seek refuge, but the village had dispersed in every direction when the soldiers attacked, and many others were now fending for themselves in various places within the vast expanse of prairie.

The chief at this time had the opportunity to examine Medicine Woman Later's wounds and discovered that his wife had been struck by no less than nine bullets. She told him that the soldiers had shot her again and again as she lay there helpless in the sand. His wife was made as comfortable as possible, but she, as was the case with many others, was in grave condition.[53]

In spite of the valiant efforts to warm and nurse the wounded, the elements were overwhelming and the suffering immeasurable. Black Kettle came to the conclusion that this makeshift camp would not protect them from freezing to death, and by dawn the soldiers would likely take up their trail. He decided that although it was still dark, they must move. Their only hope for survival was to reach the camps of the Dog Soldiers at the headwaters of the Smoky Hill River, some fifty miles away. Carrying the wounded on their backs, others shuffling along as best they could, the most severely wounded on horseback, Black Kettle's desperate people headed in a northeasterly direction across the open plain.

This weary group of Cheyenne moved slowly but steadily throughout the night and into the early morning. Suddenly, appearing from

within the glow of the rising sun, they noticed the approach of a large party of horsemen.

To their surprise and relief, it was a rescue party of Cheyennes from the Smoky Hill camps, and they had brought along with them a string of ponies laden with blankets and food. A few men had leaped astride ponies and fled from Black Kettle's village when the soldiers attacked that morning, and they had ridden all day to reach the Smoky Hill. They bravely returned with reinforcements and supplies to save any others who might have also managed to escape.

Black Kettle and his band were fed and mounted and, with renewed hope, reached the camps on the Smoky Hill late that day.[54]

George Bent described the scene that greeted them upon their arrival: "Almost everyone in that camp had friends or relatives in our camp, and when we came in sight of the lodges, everyone left camp and came out to meet us, wailing and mourning in a manner that I have never heard equalled."[55]

That wailing and mourning would soon change into war cries, as the Cheyennes and their allies vowed to avenge this bloody betrayal at Sand Creek.

9

Reaction to the Massacre

While Black Kettle and his beleaguered band of Cheyenne survivors made their way to safety, Colonel John Chivington, basking in the glory of his victory, ordered that camp for the night be made near the site of the vanquished village. The men straggled back to assemble around the bivouac area and whiled away the time boasting about their heroic deeds and collecting and showing off their gory souvenirs. Captain Silas Soule, who had held his men out of the fight, was detailed as an escort to accompany Major Anthony and the supply train to Fort Lyon. John S. Smith roamed about the field to identify the notable chiefs among the dead. He pointed out one badly mutilated body as that of Black Kettle. This premature report of the demise of the Cheyenne chief was subsequently passed on to the public and government officials.

Chivington, after posting a guard in case the Indians returned in a fighting mood, finally got around to writing his report of the "battle" to General Samuel Curtis:

> In the last ten days my command has marched 300 miles, 100 of which the snow was two feet deep. After a march of forty miles last night I, at daylight this morning, attacked Cheyenne village of 130 lodges, from 900 to 1000 warriors strong; killed chiefs Black Kettle, White Antelope, Knock Knee, and Little Robe, and between 400 and 500 other Indians, and captured as many ponies and mules. Our loss 9 killed, 38 wounded. All did nobly. Think I will catch some more of them eighty miles, on Smoky Hill. Found white man's scalp, not more than three days' old, in one of the lodges.[1]

Chivington also dispatched a messenger, who carried a letter to the editor of the *Rocky Mountain News*. The colonel stated that he had

SS#2

CONQUEST OF THE SOUTHERN PLAINS

Uncensored Narrative of the Battle of the Washita and Custer's Southern Campaign

Golden Saga Series

By CHARLES J. BRILL

Author of

"What Indian Tongues Could Tell"

"Dog Soldier"

"Red Knights"

"Before '89"

Northeastern State Teachers College Library Tahlequah, Okla.

Copyright 1938
By Charles J. Brill

GOLDEN SAGA PUBLISHERS
Oklahoma City

women captives. She was the daughter of Little Rock, second to Black Kettle in rank among the chieftains of that village. Little Rock was killed in the Washita massacre. Custer admits the maiden preferred his company to that of her own people during the four months he had her with him. This preference on her part, he said, made it unnecessary to place a guard over her movements, even when they were in the field and in close proximity to her tribe.

Magpie and Little Beaver remembered Monahseetah well. She was a little older than they, in her later 'teens, at the time she fell into Custer's hands. Magpie said the Cheyennes had little use for her after her return to the tribe when Custer went north for good because she had displayed a preference for her captor so long as he would keep her with him.

Kish Hawkins also knew her and her history. So did John Otterby. Hawkins was serving as interpreter for the writer when Little Beaver was interrogated regarding his mother's account of mistreatment of Indian women prisoners the first night after they arrived in Camp Supply. His mother, Little Beaver said, asserted this girl was Custer's selection on that occasion and that a mutual friendship seemed to spring up between them immediately. She gave birth to a child during the following summer while still a captive at Fort Hays. The papoose was yellow-haired and fair skinned.

Monahseetah named him "Yellow Swallow."
She knew Custer as "Yellow Hair."

CHAPTER TWO

Black Kettle and Other Chiefs

IN his Washita campaign Custer was destined to encounter the flower of Plains knighthood, those chiefs whose qualifications as warriors, diplomats and statesmen entitled them to a much more kindly fate than was in store for them.

Martyr of the Battle of the Washita was Black Kettle. The white man's conquest of the Western Prairies presents no more tragically heroic character than this great Cheyenne chieftain who fell at the first burst of bullets Custer's immediate command unloosed that fateful November morning as it dashed across the icy Washita.

Mighty hunter, daring warrior, wise in council, he was the most renowned of all the great leaders who lifted the Cheyennes to preeminence among the wild tribes. Not only was he first in war, but he was first in peace. Without his personal sacrifices, his constant efforts to avoid hostilities, his firm leashing of warlike spirits, the confidence placed in his diplomatic dealings with the invading whites, not only by his own people, but also by other tribes, the story of the subjugation of the western frontier would have been far more sanguinary than it is.

Black Kettle's assassination well may be considered the blackest blotch, an indelible smear against the brilliant military record of General Custer. It is one chapter all historians would have spared the story of the winning of the West; but faithfulness to fact demands that it be included.

Black Kettle earned his right to be regarded the greatest chief the Cheyennes possessed, one of the

greatest Indian leaders that ever roamed the plains, the most influential in his day from the Dominion to the Rio Grande. He had earned undying fame on the warpath long before Custer was born. Eighteen years prior to the Battle of the Washita he was one of the most celebrated of Cheyenne war chiefs. Those were the days when the Pawnees were looked upon by most contemporaries as the scourge of the Plains. Numerically strong and possessed of good mounts, they constantly were sending strong war parties from their own territory in what is now Nebraska to prey upon their rivals. For nearly thirty years they and the Cheyennes had been constant enemies. And far back, in 1853, Black Kettle was accorded the honor of carrying the sacred Cheyenne arrows into one of the most important battles between these two tribes. Such service was a mark of distinction, for the Sacred Arrows were the most potent of all Cheyenne medicines. Their capture meant disaster, hence they were entrusted to only the bravest of the brave and the most accomplished warriors.

Eight years after this notable engagement Black Kettle had achieved such prestige among his people as to be one of the principal chiefs called into council when the Government sought to have them yield their choicest hunting ground. On this occasion he refused to sign. He did not feel that the Indians were being dealt with fairly. He considered this a matter of such grave importance as to require sanction of a majority of the members of the tribe, not one to be decided by a few.

This was the beginning of Black Kettle's prestige in peace councils. From that time forth, for the remainder of his lifetime, he was the leading peace commissioner of the red men of the Southern Plains. While a stickler for the rights of his people, he always was a leading advocate of the policy of settling

Northeastern State Teachers
College Library
Tahlequah, Okla.

BLACK KETTLE

differences between the Government and Indians by diplomacy rather than by force. Always he was able to prevail upon his associates to yield slightly more than they wanted to, rather than invite further bloodshed by needless stubbornness. Always Black Kettle wanted peace for all the tribes, as well as for his own. He recognized their common claim to the prairies. He soon learned from bitter experience, however, that the white man would punish all for the overt acts of a few, regardless of individual or tribal responsibility.

His recognized preeminence among chiefs of the associated tribes and his understanding of the magnitude of his responsibilities, as well as his earnest desire to avoid clashes with the invading white forces, are strikingly illustrated by the following letter he dispatched to Agent Colley at Fort Lyon only a few weeks before the Sand Creek massacre:[1]

> We received a letter from Bent wishing us to make peace. We held a council in regard to it. All come to the conclusion to make peace with you, providing that you make peace with the Kiowas, Comanches, Arapahoes, Apaches and Sioux. We are going to send a messenger to the Kiowas and to the other nations about our going to make peace with you. We hear that you have some (Indian) prisoners in Denver. We have seven prisoners of yours which we are willing to give up, providing you give up yours. There are three (Cheyenne) war parties yet out and two Arapahoes. They have been out for some time and are expected in soon. When we held council there were few Arapahoes and Sioux present. We want true news from you in return. This is a letter.
>
> (Signed) BLACK KETTLE AND OTHER CHIEFS

Signatures of the other chiefs were immaterial. All recognized that that of Black Kettle was the only name necessary.

This letter brought results. It brought Major

1. Report of Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1865, page 233.

E. W. Wynkoop, commandant at Fort Lyon, to the Cheyenne village to receive the prisoners and to arrange for a peace council in Denver. It took Black Kettle and other chiefs on a four hundred mile pilgrimage to Denver and back to their people, a pilgrimage the Indians thought resulted in a definite, peaceful settlement of the current difficulties. But actually it led to the massacre of several of these chiefs and hundreds of their followers a few weeks later by the same officer to whom they had looked for security, believing he had promised them protection if they would separate themselves from the hostiles.

It also led to the temporary retirement of Black Kettle as head of the Cheyenne nation and recognition of another in his stead; but in less than a year's time he had been restored to supremacy, in time to place his name first on the peace treaty of 1865.

Scrapping of this treaty by the Government again weakened Black Kettle's prestige with his own people. It was with the greatest difficulty he was able to drag them back for another treaty effort in 1867. Soon thereafter assassination by Custer on the Washita ended his career.

Perhaps there could be no greater testimonial to the high rating of Black Kettle than the eagerness of all soldiers and their Indian allies to claim the distinction of having slain this famed chieftain. This in spite of the fact that Black Kettle was the outstanding exponent of peace among all the so-called wild tribesmen. To have killed him was the boast of braggarts made falsely on two occasions previous to the time of his actual death.

In the spring of 1864, Lieutenant George Eayre was sent with a detachment in search of a band of Cheyennes who were suspected of having run off some stock belonging to a Government contractor. His troops clashed with a band of Indians. Several

on each side were killed. In making his report, Eayre said Black Kettle was among those slain. This was in April.

In November of that same year, Colonel J. M. Chivington attacked Black Kettle's camp in Southern Colorado. His dispatch sent that night to General S. R. Curtis at Fort Leavenworth included this statement: "We killed Chiefs Black Kettle, White Antelope and Little Robe and between four and five hundred other Indians."

As a matter of fact, neither Black Kettle nor Little Robe was among those slaughtered on that occasion.

At the close of the Washita massacre, Trotter, one of Custer's Osage trailers, exhibited a scalp which he said was that of Black Kettle. He boasted he had engaged Black Kettle in hand-to-hand combat and, after a terrific struggle, had slain the Cheyenne leader.

Once again this claim was disproved, for no one engaged Black Kettle in hand-to-hand combat on the Washita and his scalp was not taken.

Many of Black Kettle's contemporaries, on the hunt, on the warpath, and in peace councils, also were his neighbors along the Washita. They also were destined to become victims of Custer's perfidy, although most of them escaped death at his hands during the Washita campaign.

Notable among them were Little Raven and Yellow Bear of the Arapahoes, Satanta, Satank, Lone Wolf and Kicking Bird of the Kiowas, Little Robe, Little Rock and Medicine Arrow of the Cheyennes.

As far back as the early 'Fifties, Little Raven was one of the most influential war chiefs among the Arapahoes. In 1854 the Plains Indians united to war against the eastern tribes then encroaching upon their favorite hunting grounds. These invad-

ers had killed many Cheyennes, Kiowas, Comanches and Arapahoes. Little Raven headed the Arapahoe contingent which went forth to avenge these deaths and to attempt to turn back this invasion. Six years later he represented his people in a peace council at Bent's Fort. His name is the first of the Arapahoes signing the Little Arkansas treaty of 1865 as well as the Medicine Lodge treaty of 1867.

Like Black Kettle, Little Raven always was an advocate of peace with the Whites but always he was adamant in his demand that the Indians be treated fairly. In one respect he overshadowed his illustrious Cheyenne contemporary. He was a more accomplished orator. As a result, it generally was Little Raven who served as chief spokesman for the Indians at such conferences. Of his forensic abilities one who sat in on the Medicine Lodge conference wrote:[2]

> Towering above all in native intellect and oratory—exact image of Andrew Johnson, barring his color—Little Raven, chief of the Arapahoes, was there. His speech before the commission on the question of damages, back annuities and the cause of the war would have done credit to any enlightened statesman. His reference to the Chivington massacre and ill treatment the Indians had received at the hands of white men of the frontier, who, he alleged, had been constantly infringing upon their reservation rights in the past, were scathing, and his plea for protection and better treatment in the future was the most touching piece of impassioned oratory to which the writtr ever listened, before or since.

Little Raven continued his leadership and diplomatic representations long after Custer had gone from the Washita and the Plains tribes had settled upon their reservations, yet had failed to get justice from the White Father. He was spokesmen for them

2. Alfred A. Taylor's "The Medicine Lodge Peace Council," in "Chronicles of Oklahoma," Vol II, page 113.

when a protesting delegation went to Washington for a personal conference with the president and to appeal to the citizenship of the East for justice.

It was Little Raven's Arapahoes, first village below that of Black Kettle on the Washita, which cut off Major Elliott's retreat, making it possible for the allied tribesmen to annihilate this detachment while Custer was sacking Black Kettle's camp only two miles away. Little Raven's followers also were among those who chased Custer away from the Washita that night. It was several weeks after that before Little Raven would trust his people within sight of white soldiers and then only after exacting a promise from General Sheridan that Custer would not be permitted to molest them.

Next in rank to Little Raven among the Arapahoes was Yellow Bear. He, too, was both warrior and diplomat, willing to go to any reasonable length to prevent continuation of warfare between the Indians and Whites.

Satanta was to the Kiowas of that period what Little Raven was to the Arapahoes and Black Kettle was to the Cheyennes. At that time he was about fifty years old. He had earned his place at the head of his tribe by virtue of his prowess as a warrior and his firm, brilliant record as a representative in peace councils. Though Little Raven may have excelled him in the Medicine Lodge pact negotiations so far as forensic performance is concerned, nevertheless Satanta was known throughout the nation as "the orator of the Plains."

Satanta's constant associate was Lone Wolf, a leader whose rise to prominence among his people had been gained as a war chief rather than as a diplomat. Lone Wolf was hereditary chief of the Kiowas. Throughout the conquest of the Southern Plains, Lone Wolf's fortunes and those of Satanta were strikingly parallel. Later he was among the

Plains Indian leaders who were exiled to Florida in an effort to break up sporadic rebellions against the constant encroachment of the Whites on the lands and rights of the red men of the South.

Villages of Satanta and Lone Wolf were far below the main concentration on the Washita at the time of the Black Kettle massacre. Both Satanta and Lone Wolf were sleeping in General Hazen's tent at Fort Cobb at the time, having gone there to obtain supplies.[3] Later Custer seized these two chiefs, when they approached him on a peaceful mission, and held them as hostages to force submission of their followers who yielded only on threat of the execution of their beloved chiefs.

This mistreatment and others of a similar nature were responsible for Satanta leading raiding parties into Texas a year or two later. On one of these raids the wagon-master and six teamsters of a Government freighting train were killed. When a number of Indians were arrested for this act, Satanta went to Fort Sill and attempted to take all the blame upon himself. In typical, dramatic language, he told his listeners:

"If any other Indian claims the honor of leading that party, he is not talking straight. Satanta led it."

But, despite Satanta's willingness to accept full responsibility, Big Tree, one of his companions on

3. Several years after the Battle of the Washita, General Hazen wrote a lengthy "Some Corrections of Life on the Plains," which was published in full in "Chronicles of Oklahoma," Vol. III, page 295. These "corrections" contradicted many of the assertions made by both Sheridan and Custer, especially in regard to participation by Kiowas and Comanches. On page 306 is found the following: "My retained return of provisions shows that on the 26th (of November, 1868) . . . I issued rations to nine-tenths of all the Kiowas under my charge. And that night, Satanta, Satank, Lone Wolf and nearly all of the main Kiowa chiefs slept in my tent. I had breakfast prepared for them, and they left their camp next morning, the 27th, about 10 or 11 o'clock, several hours after the battle was fought."

SATANTA

that expedition, was convicted with him and both of them were sentenced, by a cowboy jury, to be hanged at Jacksboro, Texas. Knowing how badly Satanta had been mistreated by Custer, many interceded for the two men, bringing such pressure to bear upon the Texas authorities that their sentences were commuted to life imprisonment. Parole followed. Not long thereafter Satanta was rearrested, accused of fomenting trouble among the reservation tribes, and his parole was revoked. After brooding for months over what he considered the injustice done him and his people, and, after being convinced that he could never remedy their condition, he took his own life by leaping from a window on the second floor of the prison hospital at Huntsville, Texas.

While Custer's vindicative pen painted Satanta a vicious savage, the general's contemporaries did not find him such. In the spring of 1864, H. T. Ketcham, a medical missionary, was sent among the Upper Arkansas Indians whose ranks were being ravished by an epidemic of smallpox. His duties carried him into Satanta's village and lodge. Of his experiences there he wrote:[4]

> I was four days in Satanta's, or White Bear's village, who is, I believe, their principal chief. He is a fine looking Indian, very energetic and as sharp as a briar. He and all his people treated me with much friendship. I ate meals three times a day in his lodge. He puts on a great deal of style; spreads a carpet for his guests to sit on and has painted five boards, twenty inches wide and three feet long, ornamented with bright brass tacks driven all around the edges, which they use for tables. He has a brass French horn which he blew vigorously when meals were ready.

That Satanta possessed a keen sense of humor, a sound understanding of the Indians' rights, and a highly developed knowledge of argument is evidenced by a statement he made to an investigating commission sent to the Plains by Congress, follow-

ing Custer's Washita campaign. Satanta said:[5]

> We have tried the white man's road and find it hard. We find nothing on it but a little corn which hurts our teeth. No sugar, no coffee, but we still want to walk the white man's road.
>
> We want to have guns, breach-loading carbines, ammunition and caps. These are part of the white man's road, yet you want us to go back to making arrowheads which are used only by bad, foolish Indians and have always been a mark of what was barbarous and evil. We want civilized weapons to hunt with. You want us to go back to savage ones.

Kicking Bird, like Lone Wolf, was a younger Kiowa chieftain. He was one of the few Kiowas to actualy clash with Custer at the time of the Black Kettle fight. His small band participated in the closing acts of that tragedy. His band was one of the last to yield, but, having made up his mind that the welfare of his people demanded submission, he became such an advocate of peace that he aroused the animosities of many of his contemporaries. He died suddenly, believed to have been poisoned by those who thought he was too friendly with the Whites.

Such were the Indian leaders against whom Custer was to operate.

Yet Custer called them barbarians—savages.

4. Report of Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1864, page 258.

5. Report of Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1869, page 61.

CHAPTER THREE

Creating New War Clouds