

"ANOTHER VIEW OF THE SAND CREEK AFFAIR"

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The battle at Sand Creek occurred on November 29, 1864—slightly over ninety-five years ago. That length of time should have been ample for a very minor battle—as battles go—to have found its obscure niche in human memory or, at least, for tempers to have cooled sufficiently to permit the whole constellation of problems clustered about the event to be studied thoroughly and objectively, and for generally-acceptable solutions to be established by this time.

However, Sand Creek has not been forgotten, partly because the many unsolved sections of the involved

puzzle intrigue the mind, like Mayan and Minoan inscriptions, and exert magnetic attraction possibly out of all proportion to their importance; even more, because the fires of controversy appear to be tended faithfully by some pernicious and anachronistic Vestal Virgins of the frontier who bear some ancient grudge against trustworthy and temperately-written history.

Of recent years, the authors of lurid novels and partisan histories have been joined by radio and television script-writers in picking over the carcass of the affairs, then their productions rouse the forces of vilification and vindication that again take to the field for renewed battles. Meanwhile, our poverty of reliable knowledge and insight and understanding gains small relief.

Surely, ninety-five years of controversy is more than enough. Might it not be appropriate for partisans to conclude a five-year truce and for all who are interested in any facet of the question to combine forces, for a change, and prepare to mark the centennial of that dark and bitter 1864 with a notable display of light, rather than heat?

Such a cooperative effort would have ample work cut out for it. Innumerable special problems await painstaking research, while a massive, reassembling and fitting together all but essential task—similar to that of retrievable fragments of a dynamited airplane—would be the reconstruction to the fullest degree possible of the total situation, at least, from the spring of 1864 through the investigations of 1865, in order that all factors might be observed and examined in their various, tangled relationships

and the complex whole studied from numerous angles.

The intent of this paper is to sketch out such line of approach, to note briefly several essential elements that would have to receive careful attention in the course of that study, and then to look closely for a short time at one bit of material that might have bearing on the total situation, but does not appear to have received the attention it may deserve.

So, let us assume that all retrievable fragments of the wreckage of 1864 have been assembled, that we are studying it from many angles and are not attempting to see the whole situation from the point where John M. Chivington stood. We are not concerned at this point about praise or blame; we are concerned with getting inside his boots and his mind—insofar as the records, historical craft and historical imagination will permit us—and with understanding the circumstances as he viewed them, the sum total of external pressures and internal drives that impelled him to and through the climactic event.

If, it might be noted, this aim were fully or even approximately achieved, we would come near the ideal of which historians dream. Recognition of obstacles in the way of that achievement will serve to point out problems and clusters of problems that demand study and solution—if, in fact, records exist that will provide the basis for meaningful study.

If we were to try to see through Chivington's eyes and mind the crisis of 1864 and his role in it, it is immediately evident that we would need to have extensive and penetrating knowledge about John M. Chivington himself. His major external characteristics are well authenticated: his gigantic, muscular physique, his piercing eyes, his bellowing voice. But what was his real nature beneath

that arresting exterior? What was his conception of himself? Of people in general? Of their relation to himself? Were they to be served selflessly, generously? Were they to be dominated, used for his own purposes? If people agreed with him, assisted him, admired him, did he rate them "good citizens," "fine people"? Were those who challenged him and opposed him not merely mistaken, but inately evil?

How did he gain his prominence in the community, his high offices in the church, the Masonic order, the military organization, his nomination for Congress? Did position and responsibility gravitate to him because of his abilities, because he inspired confidence and trust? Did he have some internal hunger for recognition, for power? If so, what price would he pay to feed that hunger? Did he have an inner sense of security? Could he laugh at a joke on himself? Was he insecure within his inmost nature, vulnerable to the corroding tendencies of power?

The unhappy fact is that we have, as yet, no sound knowledge of Chivington's psychological composition. He was a man of action and doubtless would be classified as an extrovert. He was apparently not given to introspection, to self-analysis—at any rate, to the point of revealing himself in diaries, letters, sermons or any other types of written records that date from the pre-Sand-Creek period and are available to us today.

That serious lack might be compensated for somewhat by knowledge of his parents, his homelife and all other influences that played upon him during his early, formative years—maybe an approximate, working-model of his psychological nature might be reconstructed upon such bases. But here is frustration and confusion! For example, let us ask: "Who and what sort of person was

his father?" Mrs. Laurel Chivington (*Denver Post*, Empire Magazine, Jan. 1, 1950) has recounted a "bitter secret" (reportedly told by the Colonel himself to his nephew, Haskell Chivington, who passed it on through the family) to the effect that the father ("John" in this story) was a quiet, straight-faced Englishman who, tiring of his nagging Irish wife in Ohio, walked out of an argument with her, went to Indiana, and without benefit of divorce married another woman; that John M. Chivington was the fruit of that union and when the thirteen-year-old boy learned of his illegitimate origin, angrily denounced his father and swore he would clear his name by winning high renown as a leader among men.

Clarence A. Lyman, who married one of the Colonel's granddaughters and produced an extensive collection of Chivington "family traditions", described the father ("Tom" in this case) as an Ohio backwoodsman who could not resist liquor and came to a sad end in a roadside snow bank with a half-filled jug clutched in his congealed hand. Reginald S. Craig, in his recent biography, *The Fighting Parson*, described the father ("Isaac" in this account) as a giant Irishman of tremendous strength and industry who built a log cabin for his family in Warren County, Ohio, and cleared a quarter section of heavily-timbered land before dying from overwork or exposure or an accident (anything but drunkenness!) when the young John was five years old.

Needless to say, John M. Chivington's family background and early years (and for that matter, all his years prior to his arrival in Denver in May, 1860) need much more research.

In the absence of significant insights into Chivington's psychology and reliable knowledge of his background, it is inescapable that history

would judge him almost wholly by his overt actions. And since some of his actions were related to highly controversial events, he has been especially vulnerable to all manner of interpretations, dependant upon the attitudes and interests of the interpreters. Actions may speak louder than words—but the variety of languages which an action may be made to speak is truly remarkable.

In our effort to understand the Chivington of 1864, one fact is unquestionable and significant: from the day of his arrival in Denver he had been a prominent, aggressive, dominant personality. He had held high positions in several important areas of community life and it is surely not illogical to assume that that record of leadership exerted its impelling force upon him. He was not accustomed to failure. Can one conceive of his admitting even the possibility of failing in his critical role as Commander of the Colorado Military District? If, to the force of his record and responsibilities, were added ambitious desire for still higher station, for advancement in military rank or for the dignity of a seat in Congress, he was indeed under weighty internal pressures during the summer and autumn of 1864.

The external pressure of the military situation in 1864 was immense. From April through August Indian attacks along the Platte and the Arkansas, the Overland, Santa Fe and Smoky Hill Trails, on ranches and settlements were vigorous and vicious. Immigrant trains, freight lines carrying essential supplies, passenger and mail coaches proceeded at great risk intermittently and were stopped altogether for varying periods. With the Second Colorado Cavalry moved out of the territory into eastern Kansas and Missouri the Confederates the widely distributed units of the First Colorado could do nothing

more than provide scattered and inadequate defense.

Efforts of Governor Evans, as territorial Superintendent of Indian affairs, to meet with tribal leaders in early summer had failed completely and his attempt in late June to isolate friendly bands from the war parties met with meagre success. By late July, he had become convinced that there could be no peace until the Indians had been severely chastised by military forces and even S. G. Colley, the Indian agent at Fort Lyons, had arrived at the conclusion that "powder and lead were necessary.

At last, after Washington had long turned a deaf ear to urgent and repeated requests for increased military aid and Gov. Evans had resorted to the expedient of calling upon the citizens to arm and defend themselves, either on their own or in organized militia units, the War department finally, on August 11 (*War of Rebellion, Official Records, hereafter referred to as WRR* XLI, pt. 2, 695; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*—hereafter *DRMN*—Aug. 13) authorized the enlistment of a regiment for 100 days of service. Recruitment began immediately in Denver, Central City and elsewhere, and before the month had ended, enough men were enlisted to form a regiment which, if and when furnished with horses and arms and adequate training, might enable aggressive and effective action to be taken against the Indians.

Several aspects of the situation after mid-August are especially pertinent to our effort to penetrate Chivington's point of view. One was that, in the existant state of war, the civil officials had resigned to the military, authority to deal with the Indians. Evans stated that plainly in the Denver meeting with the Cheyenne and Arapahoe chiefs on September 28 and his message the next day to Colley at Fort Lyons was clear.

Second: the attitude of Chivington's immediate superior, Major-General S. R. Curtis, Commandant of the department, was bluntly stated in his dispatch to Chivington on the 28th (the day When Evans, Chivington and Wynkoop met with the chiefs in Denver): "I want no peace till the Indians suffer more . . . no peace must be made without my directions. (*WRR* XLI, pt. 3, 462) order stood unchanged before Sand Creek. That he intended they be obeyed was emphasized by Wynkoop's replacement at Fort Lyon on November 2 by Major Scott J. Anthony who was reminded by his District Commander, Major Henning, that the Department Commander would "not permit or allow treaty with the Indians without his approval" nor "allow any Indian to approach any post on any excuse whatsoever." (*WRR*, XLI, pt. 4, 62)

If action against the Indians were to be limited to obeying such negative injunctions, it would give small satisfaction to the roughly 700 men of the Third Colorado Cavalry, and no one would be more sensitive to that fact than Chivington. It is undoubtedly misleading to think of those men as trained steady, disciplined soldiers; they were civilians who had left their families and their many occupations for a period of one-hundred days—not for the purpose of "not making any treaty" but for the purpose of reducing as much as possible, of obliterating if possible, the tangible, immediate, personal danger of the Indian.

It was reported (*DRMN*, Sept. 29) that, on the day following the meeting of Evans and Chivington with the chiefs on September 28, a mutiny nearly broke out among the Third Colorado units at Camp Evans when the word got around that a treaty had been concluded with the Indians and that there would be no fighting. The nature and expectations of the Third

Regiment of 100-day men, who constituted the overwhelming preponderance of military force in the district, inevitably exerted a pressure of great force in Chivington.

And to that pressure must be added that of the civilian population from which the 100-day men were drawn. At the peak of the crisis, martial law was declared on August 17 (DRMN, Aug. 23) and all male citizens of Denver, sixteen years of age and above, were required to register for service in defense of the town. As the situation was described in the *Rocky Mountain News* on August 23:

Denver is now thoroughly military in every respect. Every able-bodied citizen over 16 years is enrolled. Those who have not gone into the 100-day service or enrolled themselves in the volunteer militia companies are gobbled (sic) up in the provost guard. The Hundred Day men are rapidly preparing for the field, and fatigue parties of the militia men are employed in the construction of defences around the city. Business is suspended except for two hours each day—from eleven to one—and nearly all work has ceased.

Between August 14 and September 29 only one mail was received directly from the east (DRMN, Aug. 24, Sept. 29; Hafen, *Overland Mail*, pp. 259-61); telegraph communication with the east was repeatedly cut off, and prices on food and supplies of all sorts rose alarmingly, DRMN, Nov. 18). Meanwhile, the causes of all these woes—Indian raids and massacres along the Platte and Arkansas and in the area between—were reported continuously through August, September and October. Fear and insecurity are seldom the parents of temperate judgment, and Denver citizens, who had been thrown into a state of mass hysteria earlier in the summer were not inclined to be temperate and reasonable, and to recognize that the simple enlistment of a regiment would not work immediate miracles.

That regiment had to have horses, field equipment all sorts, carbines, re-

volvers, and ammunition—and most of these essentials had to come from the East where greater dangers and louder, nearer voices were competing for the same supplies. And the same dangers that halted coaches bringing passengers and mail hindered the passage of freighters bringing weapons and ammunition. It is not surprising, however, that exasperation mounted as precious days ticked off of the 100-day period of service and death and destruction still roamed the plains. So people took to calling the restless Third Colorado the "Bloodless Third," and their annoyance that nothing evident was being done and their insistence that something very effective be done to end the intolerable conditions of their daily existence, centered upon the Commander of the military district.

Public attitude toward Chivington was, however, complicated during this critical period by the bitter battle over the statehood question. After the Convention had completed its work of drawing up the proposed constitution, the pro-state "Union Administration" party, led by Governor Evans and Henry M. Teller, selected its slate of candidates on August 2-3, with Chivington listed as nominee for Congressional Representative (E. ELLIS, *Colo. Mag.*, VIII, 23-30).

The ensuing campaign was waged with no holds barred on either side, and with Evans and Chivington getting especially virulent treatment by the anti-staters. The outcome was that the pro-state advocates and their constitution were decisively defeated in the election held on September 13 (DRMN, Sept. 14, 15, 19, 28; and November 4). What effects might such attacks and such defeat have upon Chivington in impelling him to seek to recapture public approval by a dramatic performance in the military field?

It is instructive, in this connection,

to note that his involvement in politics had been observed with displeasure by his immediate superior, Major-General Curtis, Commander of the Department of Kansas. On July 30, even before Chivington had been publicly named as the Congressional candidate of the pro-staters, General Curtis wrote to him: "I fear your attention is too much attracted by other matters than your command, and hope that you will feel the importance of completing a good record which you commenced in the line of your present duties, whatever turn other matters of public interest may take in Colorado." (WRR XLI, pt. 2, 483-84). Chivington responded fervently: "I assure you that I have not spent an hour or gone a mile to attend to other matters than my command." He assured his superior that even before receipt of his letter, he had publicly declined to participate in a campaign for the State constitution or for his election to Congress. And he stated: "I shall continue to give unremitting attention to a military character." (WRR XLI, pt. 2, 613-14).

To this combination of possible internal tensions and inescapable pressures there was added in October an additional factor that may have been the culminating force exerted on Chivington as he moved into the field for action against the Indians. Let us emphasize "May"—for this possibility is advanced as a tentative hypothesis.

In June the powerful and imperious proprietor of the Overland Stage Line, Ben Holladay, gained renewal of the four-year contract to transport the U. S. mail from Atchison to Salt Lake City via Denver. W. N. Byers, who had no love whatsoever for Holladay, commented in the *Rocky Mountain News* on June 3: "For four years more Colorado, Utah, and Nevada belong to Ben Holladay for a

footstool and may the Lord have mercy on them."

Late in the long period, from mid-August to deep-September during which Indian depredations virtually put the Overland Stage Lines out of business, Holladay and General Curtis agreed upon a plan for stationing troops along the Overland route. (WRR VLI, pt. 3, 334). Then Holladay personally supervised the distribution of horses, equipment, and supplies and the reopening of stations preparatory to getting the coaches rolling again. His demands upon the harassed Curtis, whose small forces were being drained away to meet Price's advance, were increasingly heavy and impertinent.

Before starting westward from Atchison, Holladay on September 23, requested that the use of soldiers as stock-tenders at Kearney be authorized, in view of the lack of civilian labor. Holladay added. "With your advice and assistance and my determination, I know we can put this line into operation." (Ibid., p. 334). From Julesburg on October 1, Holladay reported more attacks on coaches and haycutters and stated that it would be necessary to assign at least five soldiers to every station along the route and two to four soldiers to to every coach to keep the line open (Ibid., pp. 549-50).

Colonel Chivington had already sent out four companies of the Third Colorado to old Fort Lupton, to Latham, Junction, and Valley stations along the Overland route, doubtless to enable them to get as much seasoning as possible while awaiting better armament, horses and supplies, and repeatedly assured Curtis of the security of the line between Julesburg and Denver (Ibid., pt. 2, 946; pt. 3, 335, 625). Such assurances were doubtless repeated to Holladay when Chivington and Secretary Elbert met him at Latham (DRMN,

Oct 3) to plan a shortening of the stage route northeast of Denver.

However, when Holladay finally reached Salt Lake City, claiming to

west of Kearney, Holladay warned Secretary Stanton, the Overland mails would have to be halted again. His dispatch continued:



Artists drawing of Camp Weld, Denver, where members of Colorado Volunteers were assembled before battle of Sand Creek. Courtesy Colo. State Historical Society.

have had a narrow escape from Indians, he informed Curtis on October 10, through R. M. Hughes at Atchison, attorney for the Overland Stage Lines, that no peace with the Indians could be expected until aggressing and crushing war was waged upon them in their camps. Attorney Hughes continued:

"Patrolling the road and a merely defensive policy . . . will do nothing We must open war in its most serious form with them, follow them to their fortresses, and slay without sparing all who can fight. A winter campaign, well devised, would utterly break their power and learn them to fear, if not respect, our Government (WRR, XLI, pt. 3, 768)"

Not satisfied with this indirect volley, Holladay fired one point-blank five days later by sending a vigorous dispatch from Salt Lake City straight to the Secretary of War (WRR, VLI, pt. 3, 903). Unless immediate measures were taken to stop the Indian attacks on coaches every few days forty to sixty miles

I most respectfully urge that General Connor be assigned to this duty at once. His familiarity with Indian warfare, his prompt and efficient protection of the western line, wholesome dread of the savages of his name, point to him above all others as the man for the work of punishing these marauders. The units at camp Evans when the word got around that a treaty had been concluded with the Indians and that there would be no fighting. The nature and expectations of the Third Regiment of 100-day men, who constituted the overwhelming preponderance of military force in the District, inevitably exerted a pressure of great force in Chivington.

Holladay took it upon himself to assure the Secretary that everything was quiet in Utah and that Connor could "Well be spared for the necessary time to accomplish the work speedily and effectually with the means at his command."

The officer whom Holladay was nominating for the duty of ending the Indian menace out on the plains was Brigadier-General Patrick Edward Connor, Commandant of the Utah Military District. He was a red-whiskered, sandy-haired, blue-eyed, square-shouldered Irishman of

medium height born in County Kerry in St. Patrick's Day, 1820 and reared in New York. He served in the regular army for five years (1839-44) on the frontier of that time which was marked by Forts Leavenworth, Des Moines and Sanford. In 1846, in Texas, he again enlisted and served for a year with the Texas Volunteers in Mexico, was promoted to Captain, was wounded, and honorably discharged. The gold rush carried him to California, where he engaged in various commercial enterprises, married, and became an influential and energetic citizen of Stockton.

In September, 1861, he was mustered in as Colonel of the Third California Volunteer Infantry. The next year, instead of being ordered to the Potomac, he and his indignant regiment were ordered to Utah; after a long march from California, the autumn of 1862 found Connor and his Californians engaged in constructing Camp Douglas outside Salt Lake City and endeavoring to protect the Overland Mail and outlying settlements from the Shoshoni and to handle the hardly less difficult problem of getting along with Brigham Young and his co-religionists.

Connor's reputation in the West and "the dread of this name" among Indians had been established in January 1863 by his crushing defeat of a large concentration of Shoshoni and Bannocks at the conjunction of Battle Creek and Bear River, not far from the site of present-day Preston, Idaho (WRR, L, pt. 1, 185-87). Connor's secret 140-mile march to the Indian camp was made in four nights in exceedingly bitter weather; the Indians encampment attacked at daybreak and the battle raged for several hours. Two hundred twenty-four Indian dead counted on the field, and thereafter those tribes showed marked respect for the leader who, in recognition of his victory, was pro-

moted to rank of Brigadier-General on March 29, 1863 (Ind., pp 184, 187).

Holladay's telegram to Secretary Stanton produced quick results. On the following day (Oct. 16) general Halleck, Chief of Staff, War Department ignored the niceties of military procedure and telegraphed Connor directly: "Give all the protection in your power to the Overland route between you and Fort Kearney without regard to departmental lines. General Curtis' forces have been diverted by rebel raids from Arkansas." (WRR, XLI, pt. 4, 24; L, pt. 2 1013).

This remarkable order raised at least one important question in Connor's mind, and that he fired back at Halleck the next day (October 17): "To render efficient protection, the troops between Salt Lake and Kearney, inclusive should be subject to my orders irrespective of departmental lines. Do I understand your telegram to mean that?" (*Ibid.*, XLI, pt. 4, 63; L, pt. 2, 1014). Halleck's reply (October 18) was that his order was not intended to transfer troops or change commanders, except when parts of different commands acted together; then the ranking officer would take general command temporarily (*Ibid.*, XLI, pt. 4, 101; L, pt 2, 1015.)

Such a reply was probably all that could have been expected since Halleck's original order had probably been a flash action triggered by Holladay's dispatch. However, it left Connor in the uncomfortable position of bearing the responsibility for protecting the Overland but lacking all authority to require the Commandants of the districts of Kansas and Nebraska to cooperate with him in the event they were disinclined to do so.

Of course, he could use his own forces, insofar as discretion would allow him to send part of his small command eastward into northern

Colorado or western Nebraska; aside from that he could only ask his neighboring opposite numbers to contribute contingents for a combined force under his command. That he proceeded to do so, by sending a telegram to Chivington on October 22:

Governor Evans (to whom Connor had also sent some unrecorded message) promptly replied that he was glad Connor was coming and urged him to bring as large a force as possible in order that the Indians might be totally destroyed; until that was accomplished there would be no permanent peace on the plains. The Governor, of course, had nothing to say about grain or troops. (*WRR*, L, pt. 2, 1036).

If Chivington answered, his reply failed to get into the official records. Quite aside from whatever Chivington's reactions may have to this threatened invasion of his jurisdiction by an officer who outranked him, who had much greater experience than he had, and who possessed the direct backing of the Secretary of War, a hard fact was that Connor was proposing to step out on Chivington's stage and was requesting the use of some of his troops when his own expedition had begun moving and he had no forces to loan anyone—even if he had been inclined to do so.

By mid-October the units of the Third Colorado had been, with great difficulty, reasonably fitted out with arms and horses, and less than a week before Connor sent his dispatch, Major Hal Sayr, who was in command of the companies stationed Camp Eaton and Junction station, had received his orders to proceed to rendezvous in the Bijou Basin, some seventy miles southeast of Denver (L. Perrigo, "Major Hal Sayr's Diary," *Colo. Mag.* XV, 50-51). When Connor's inquiry arrived, Sayr's battalions as well as other units of

the third were moving by various routes toward that destination.

That Chivington was agitated by Connor's dispatch, and its possible implication, was evident from Chivington's message to Curtis on October 26. He repeated Connor's telegram and then asked: "Have departmental lines been changed? If not, will I allow him to give directions in this district?" He assured Curtis that the line to Julesburg was "perfectly protected" and added: "The line this side Julesburg ought to be in this district, as my troops are taking care of it." (*WRR*, XLI, pt. 4, 259). There is no indication in the official records that Chivington received any advice, or even a reply, departmental headquarters in response to his inquiry—and understandably so, since the campaign against Price was at its peak, and General Curtis and his staff were in the field.

Meanwhile Connor was getting squared away at Camp Douglas to begin carrying out his orders from Halleck. On October 30 he informed his superior, the Commandant of the Department of the Pacific at San Francisco, of his plans. In a few days two companies of his California cavalry would start for Denver, where he expected they would arrive in twenty-five days. He himself would make a quick trip to Denver to gather information upon which to base his plans and subsequent actions. If it should appear practicable to make a winter's campaign with a fair probability of severely punishing the Indians, he would make arrangements for the collection and disposition of troops and then return to Camp Douglas. When everything was ready, he would then return to assume personal command of the expedition and make Denver his base of operations (*Ibid.*, L, pt. 2, 1036-37).

These plans were put in motion in

early November, but had to be altered when the two companies of cavalry encountered severe storms and deep snow and had to be halted at Fort Bridger. General Connor, however, accompanied by Captain Charles Hempstead and Ben Holladay, proceeded to Denver and put up at the Planter's House on the evening of November 14. *The Rocky Mountain News* of the following day noted the arrival of the two officers (completely and characteristically ignoring the proprietor of the Overland Stage Lines), reported a pleasant visit with Capt. Hemstead who, in addition to his military duties at Camp Douglas, edited the "lively and spicy" daily *Vedette*, and stated in regard to General Connor: "We are not prepared to state official business brought the Brigadier here, if any, although rumor is rife on this point and that" (*DRMN*, Nov. 15, 1864).

Whatever Chivington's personal attitude toward Connor may have been, he observed the amenities of proper official behavior. On the evening of the 15th, the band of the First Regiment was turned out to serenade the visiting General at the Planter's House, with Colonel Chivington, a number of his officers, and a "large assemblage" of citizens in attendance. *The Rocky Mountain News* of the following day, in reporting the serenade, was lavish in its praise of Connor—"a fighter and a gentlemen and a soldier to boot," "a man that suits the genius of this West."

Many years later, in 1890, Chivington wrote that it was his impression, from the day of Connor's arrival in Denver, "that he had been ordered here by the Secretary of War to see whether we were efficiently prosecuting this campaign against the Indians" ("The Pet Lambs," *Denver Republican*, May 18, 1890). Of course, Chi-

vington knew that Connor had come for much more than that, and the public might well have suspected as much.

The *Rocky Mountain News* in reporting the serenade at the Planter's House, stated: "... Colorado will appreciate (General Connor's) mission. He comes here to take a look at the field and ascertain the feasibility of punishing the Indians on the Overland mail route" (*DRMN*, Nov. 16). The veil was drawn even wider three days later when Byers reprinted a story from Captain Hempstead's *Vedette* of November 5 that told of the General's going to Denver and "perhaps to Kearney to study the possibility of punishing the savages. "The article continued: "Should a winter campaign be deemed at all feasible, the General will organize his expedition to that end and, at the proper time, return to Denver and command in person." (*DRMN*, Nov. 19).

How Chivington's friends and foes interpreted such statements, what effects the release of such information had on him and his relations with Connor, we do not know anymore then we know what meetings they had together or what they said to one another. It is clear, however, that any hopes General Connor may have had of near by cooperation from the Commander of the Colorado Military District were thoroughly dashed, for on November 21—the day after Chivington left Denver to join his forces at Booneville and move on to Sand Creek (*DRR*, XLI, pt. 1, 948) the visiting Brigadier-General wrote an extended report to General Halleck (*Ibid*, pp. 908-10).

He regretfully informed the Chief of Staff that he was unable to organize an expedition under existing conditions because the Indian country was "intersected and cut up

by several military districts, the commanders of which appear to be of the opinion they can spare no troops for a winter campaign." He hoped that effective action might be taken in the spring before the Indians broke up their winter encampments, and continued:

"I beg leave, respectfully, to suggest that for the successful prosecution of this undertaking, it is highly important that authority be granted to call on district commanders for such additional troops as in my opinion can be safely spared from the posts during the time necessary to accomplish the purpose named. Without such authority any expedition is likely to prove, if not abortive, at least ineffective. With it, I entertain the confident opinion that an effective blow can be struck in time to prevent the renewed outrages which well may be anticipated during the coming summer."

Many years later, in 1890, Chivington wrote (*Denver Republican*, May 18, 1890) that when he had mounted to start the journey to join his troops at Booneville, General Connor came up and expressed his confidence that the Indians were in for a "terrible threshing"—if Chivington could catch them out on the plains. At the close of the conversation Connor asked: "Colonel, where are those Indians?" Chivington recalled that he replied: "General, that is the trick that wins this game, if the game is won. There are but two persons who know their exact location, and they are myself and Colonel George L. Shoup." "Well," protested Connor, "I won't tell anybody." Chivington replied: "I will bet you don't!"

When those two officers parted after their brief conversation and went their respective ways, they followed routes that led to different fortunes. The slighter of the two, the red-whiskered Irish Brigadier-General returned to Utah two days later (*DRMN*, Nov. 21), but he would return to Denver after a few months, to establish his headquarters as Commandant of the newly organized District of the plains, with Colorado, Nebraska and Utah under his juris-

diction (*WRR*, XLVIII, pt. I, 1285). The other officer, the giant with the piercing eye, rode out on his way to the Pyrrhic victory which, whether he deserved it or not, would ruin him.

If we could know what was in his mind as he rode toward Bonneville, what and how he thought about Connor, we would know much about his nature, and that knowledge might go far toward clarifying our understanding of Sand Creek. Did he think of Connor as a respected fellow-officer and gentleman with whom one swapped stories and experiences, a friendly rival with whom one played a good-natured game of jurisdictional chess? "How many troops can you spare me for a campaign?"— "Sorry, General, I can't spare any—I have my own plans for all of my troops." "Colonel, just where are those Indians? I won't tell anybody."—"General, I'll bet you won't, because I'm not about to tell you!" Checkmate!

Or did he think of him as a successful fighter who had made his name by a fast, hard, secret march in better weather to unleash a crushing attack upon an Indian encampment at daybreak and win his rank by great slaughter?

Or did the Colonel's face darken as he thought of Connor as a menace to his position, his power, his reputation—a threatening rival who would displace him, tower over him, unless he could cast the Irish Brigadier and his Battle of Bear River into the shadows by winning a much greater victory? Were such thoughts in his mind during the consultations at Fort Lyon on the 28th? Did they impel his actions, affect his orders at the bloody encounter the next day? Might they have encouraged him, in writing his reports of the battle, to have magnified somewhat the size of the opposing force of Indians, to have padded the numbers of the enemy

killed? Did he harbor the hope that someone up the ladder of authority would exclaim, "Connor killed his two hundreds, but Chivington killed his six hundreds!"? Behind his request that all companies of the First Colorado and the Eleventh Ohio be put under his command so that he could effectually "rid the country between the Platte and Arkansas" of the "red rebels" (*WRR*, XLI, pt 1, 950), was there any hope of cutting the ground from under Ben Holladay's nominee for that honor?

In our present ignorance of a multitude of pertinent factors, we cannot

answer these questions with any assurance — there are too many unknowns in the equation. It would seem logical to assume that to the many pressures upon John M. Chivington in late 1864, the impact of Patrick Edward Connor and all that he represented may well have been a significant addition, but we lack the scales by which that particular force can be measured. The evidences are all circumstantial.

Possibly, in raising the question, just another mystery has been added to the riddles that are wrapped up in the enigma of Sand Creek.