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CULTURAL LANDSCAPE INVENTORY
LEVEL TWO

WASHITA BATTLEFIELD NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



National Park Service
Intermountain Support Office – Santa Fe
November 1999

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CULTURAL LANDSCAPE INVENTORY
LEVEL TWO
WASHITA BATTLEFIELD NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

National Park Service
Intermountain Region - Southwest Cluster

November 1999

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"It was while in their weakness and while seeking safety from the winter snow and cold that fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters and children were massacred in the Washita Valley in their country by General Custer and his troops who swooped down on them and wiped the camp out. This was caused by some of the disobediant Cheyennes and by their rebellious acts."

Joe Purcell, Cheyenne Tribe, from August 16, 1937 interview.
Source: Indian Pioneer Papers, Oklahoma Historical Society Library,
Foreman Collection, Vol. 41,p.7

". . .Custer had no information as to his relative strength. As it turned out, the village which he was about to assault consisted of only fifty-one lodges, with perhaps two hundred warriors under the ill-fated Cheyenne chieftan, Black Kettle . . . The danger inherent in a plan calling for such a wide dispersion of forces, especially since no reserve was held out, is quite apparent. It reflected, however, the impetuous nature of its author. This time luck was with Custer. But on another field, eight years later, his famous star of fortune was to be blotted out."

Colonel W.S. Nye, 1943, *Carbine and Lance*; quoted on p. 20 of Brown 1964 *Special Report on Washita Battlefield, Oklahoma.*

"We could hear the women singing; they sang some war songs and some death songs . . . A lot of the little children were still barefooted and lots of their feet were frozen."

B.K. Young Bird, Cheyenne Tribe
Source: *Indian Pioneer Papers*, Oklahoma Historical Society Library,
Foreman Collection, Vol. 52, p125 (no date).

"We have no food so we just spread our ponchos on the snow and make our beds on them a little distance from the fire. . . When some one begins to curse the Government or some one for our condition, everyone jumps on him . . . The idea is to be cheerful under any circumstances and if we don't feel that way it is wise to keep still."

Private David L. Spotts, *Campaigning with Custer and the Nineteenth Kansas Volunteer Cavalry on the Washita Campaign, 1868-69.* 1928. Edited by E.A. Brininstool. Los Angeles: Wetzer Publishing Co. Quoted in S. Hoig, 1976, *The Battle of the Washita*, p. 108.

"Unquestionably a new chapter had been written in western Indian wars. Sheridan had proved that winter military operations on the Great Plains were possible. And no one realized this better now than the hostile Indians. Heretofore they had been secure in their winter villages . . . But the destruction of Black Kettle's band and the forced removal of the Arapaho and the Cheyenne were concrete examples of a new order. No longer would winter bring security . . ."

Carl Coke Rister, 1944, *Border Command, General Phil Sheridan in the West*, quoted on p. 34 of Brown 1964 *Special Report on Washita Battlefield, Oklahoma.*

Cultural Landscape Inventory
Washita Battlefield National Historic Site

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Acknowledgements

Thanks go to the many people who helped with this Inventory. Superintendent Sarah Craighead provided on-going assistance and support. Gordon Yellowman, Lawrence Hart and Joe BigMedicine helped me understand tribal viewpoints, and Gordon Yellowman provided feedback on the document. Betty Wesner provided much historical and recent information, and graciously allowed access to the property before it became a National Park System unit. Also, Betty and Brian Wesner provided information on the family's farming and ranching operation. Bob Blackburn, Bob Duke, Mary Jane Warde, Bob Rae and Bill Lees from the Oklahoma Historical Society, Reggie Blackwell from the U.S. Forest Service, and Greg Allen from the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Cheyenne provided invaluable assistance during the research phase. Review comments were provided by Sarah Craighead, Steve Black, Charles Sides and Kurt Foote from the park, Bob Duke, Mary Jane Warde and Bob Rae from the Oklahoma Historical Society, and Bob Spude from the National Park Service in Santa Fe. The document cover was designed and produced by Catherine Colby.

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Summary (Figures 1-6; Figure 6 is the 1998 Site Plan)

General -- This historic site and ethnographic landscape (the 315.2 acre National Historic Site or core area) consists of a section of the Washita River corridor, adjacent floodplain and upland areas, located in western Oklahoma. The general area was used by Plains Tribes as a traditional use area (e.g. hunting). In 1868, the most intense activity of the Washita conflict occurred within the core area. Since 1868, a number of memorials have been placed on the slope to the south of the river, overlooking the village site, and the area has been settled, farmed and ranched by Anglo-American settlers. The core area, and the battlefield as a whole, has traditional and contemporary cultural and historical value for the Cheyenne community, and to other Native American groups. (See Ethnographic Values section below)
Significance -- This CLI finds that the Washita Core Area is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, and eligible as a National Historic Landmark, as a cultural landscape. The period of historic significance for the core area is 1868, the year when the conflict took place. The period of ethnographic significance is from 1868 to the present. In this inventory, contributing landscape elements can date from 1868 or after 1868 if they are directly related to the Washita conflict and its aftermath. (See also Statement of Significance and Integrity)
Integrity -- While the core area has been modified by agricultural-related activity and construction of the railroad (now abandoned), it remains substantially intact. The overall integrity rating is high. (See also Statement of Significance and Integrity)
Condition -- Due to the presence of a number of exotic plant species and erosion in a number of locations, the overall condition of the landscape is fair.
Tangible and intangible elements -- The great majority of extant tangible significant landscape characteristics are natural resources (the river and riparian area, landforms, flora and fauna). Tangible features also include the memorials and prayer offerings in the State Overlook area. Intangible elements that can be thought of as characteristics of the Washita landscape include the stories and memories embodied in the landscape.
Recommendation – It is recommended that the existing National Register nomination for Washita be revised to more fully incorporate landscape values, and that the property category be changed to "district."

Cultural Landscape Contexts

(Figures 7-9)

Physiographic: The study area is located within the larger Washita River valley in the rolling hills and plains country of western Oklahoma. The river's riparian corridor and the red sandstone bluffs to the north provide more variety in vegetation and topography than much of the surrounding region. From Brown 1964, Appendix, pp. 3-5: ". . In general, the battle site is a natural amphitheater formed by the Washita River. The river flows easterly on a meandering course. Cutting through the red shale of the region, the stream has carved a valley about 1 1/2 to 2 miles wide. Flanking the valley on north and south are craggy bluffs and hills of resistant red sandstone standing 250-400 feet above the lowlands. The course of the river is timbered with elms, cottonwoods, and willows. Bordering the timber are parallel swaths of agricultural land which quickly give way to broken slopes covered with grass, sage and shinnery *(oak)*. The low oaks and brush

thicken as the land rises into the hills *(in some areas).* This higher, broken land is presently used for grazing."

Cultural: In the 1860s, the core area of Washita was located within both the Tribal and U.S. exploration/trading/military areas. It was a wintering and hunting area and believed to be a sanctuary from the U.S. Army for Plains Tribes. The area was also part of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Reservation. Camp Supply (now Fort Supply), located to the north, was established in November 1868. Fort Sill, located to the south, was established after the Battle of the Washita, in December 1868 and January 1869. The Washita River served as a major circulation route for Anglo-American explorers and traders moving west. The Washita conflict site is one of the areas within the Red River Wars region. The core area is significant to contemporary Plains groups, especially the Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribes (see Ethnographic Values section). Today, the area is part of rural western Oklahoma, where agriculture involves mostly wheat, cattle and cotton.

Political:. The core area is about 1 mile west of the town of Cheyenne, the county seat of Roger Mills County. Surrounding lands that are within the larger battlefield (National Historic Landmark) are presently in private ownership. The core area is surrounded by farming and ranching country, with some acreage set aside within the Black Kettle Grasslands, administered by the U.S. Forest Service. Traditionally-associated communities and interest groups include the Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribes, Custer groups (potentially Custer Battlefield and Museum Association, Little Bighorn Association, and Order of Indian Wars), the Washita Battlefield Historical Society, the Oklahoma Historical Society, and the Council on Abandoned Military Posts (CAMP).

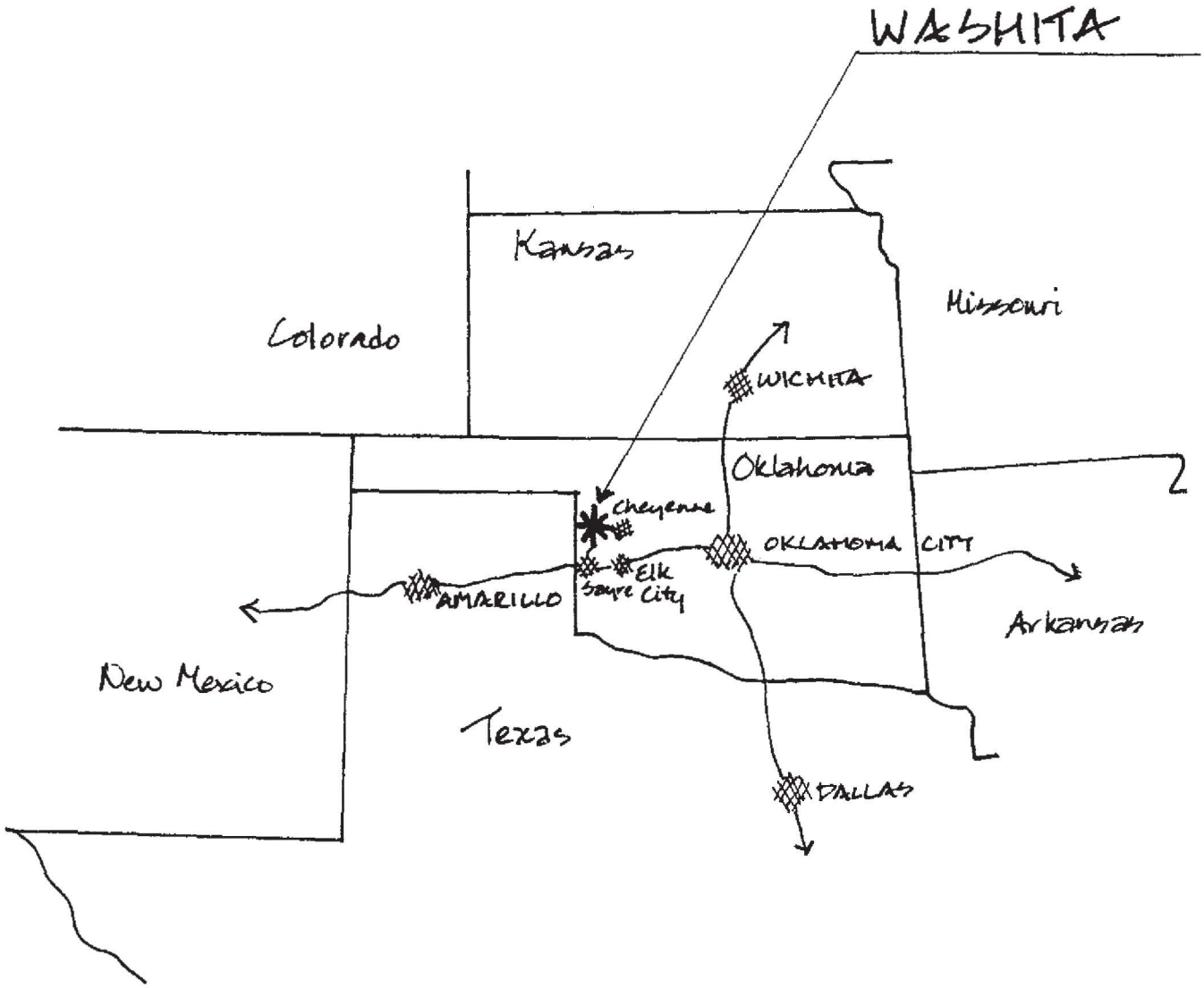


Figure 1
REGION

Adapted from
1970 Alternatives
Study

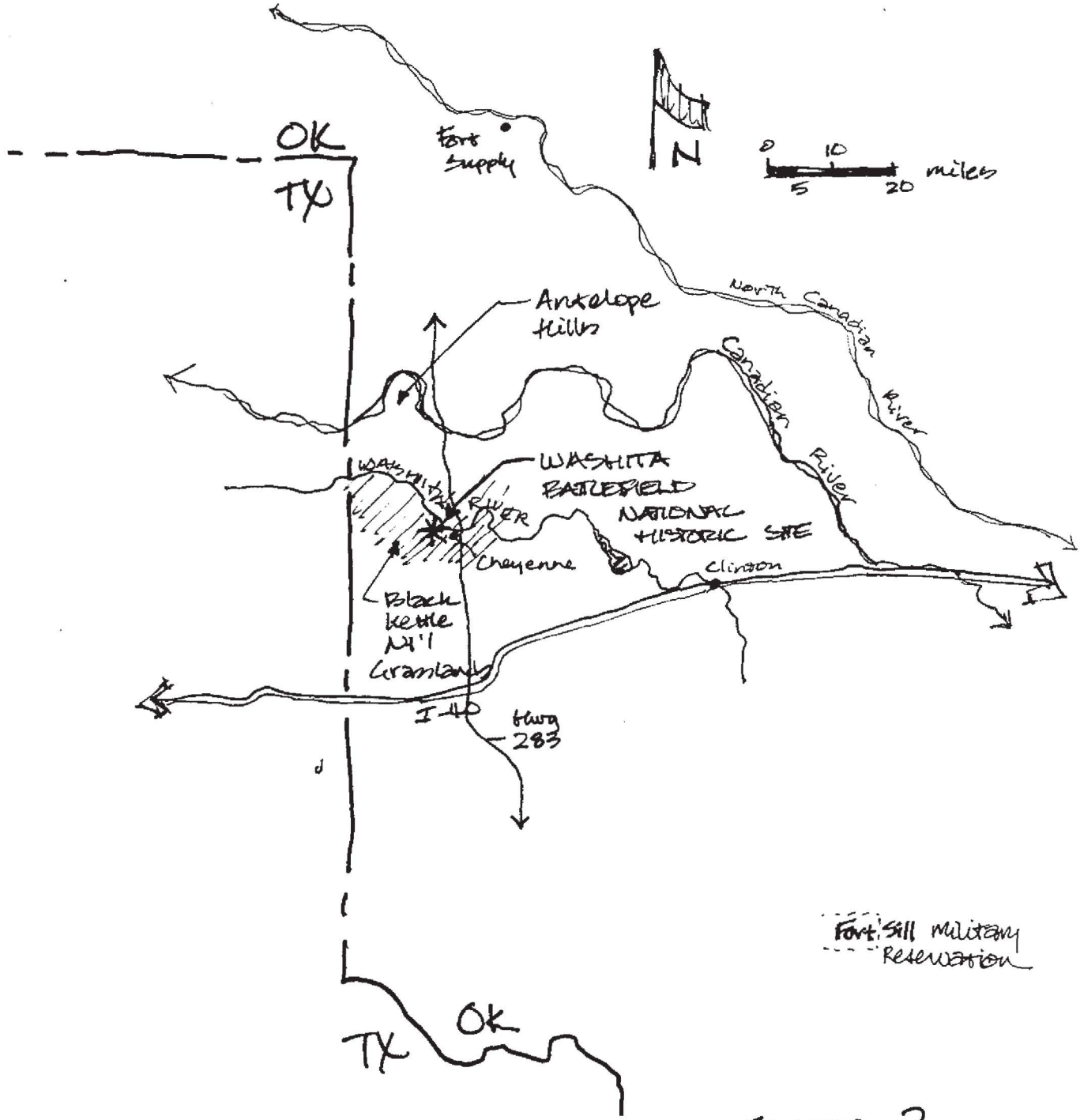


FIGURE 2

REGION detail

Source: 1996
Rand McNally Road Atlas

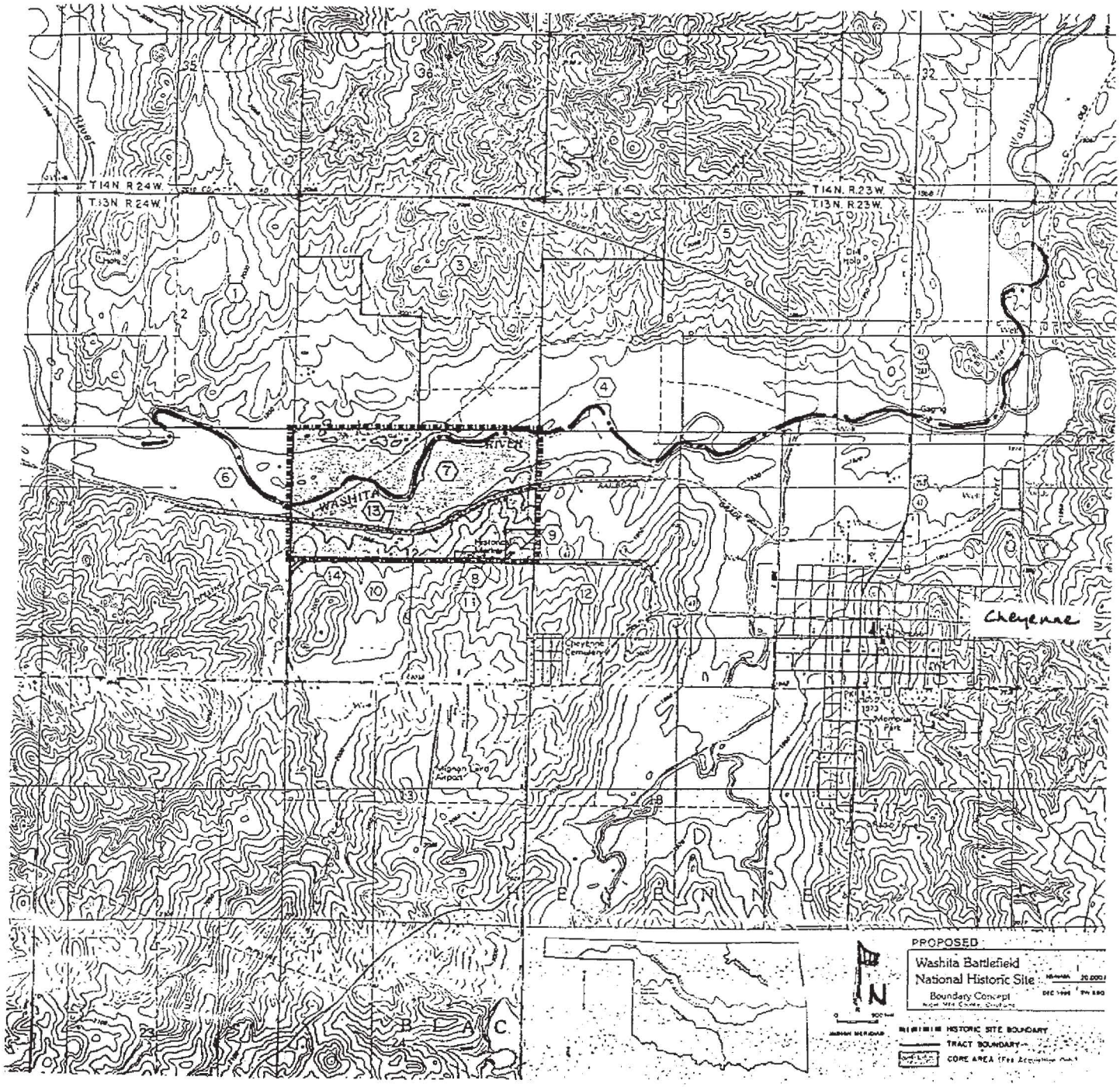


FIGURE 3

WASHITA BATTLEFIELD NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Source: NPS map # WARA 20,000A 1995

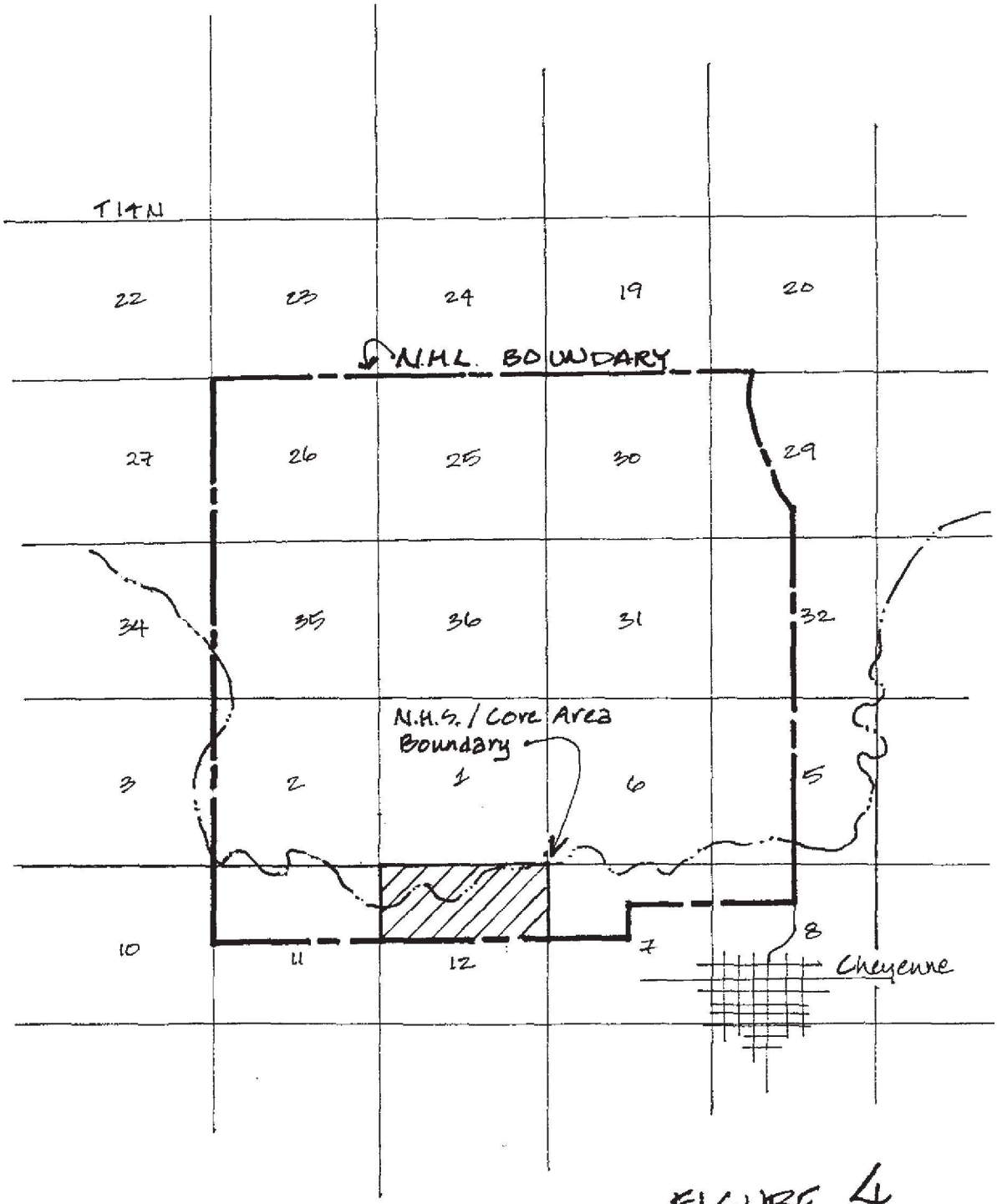


FIGURE 4.

N.H.L. (BATTLEFIELD) BOUNDARY

Source: 1976 NHL form

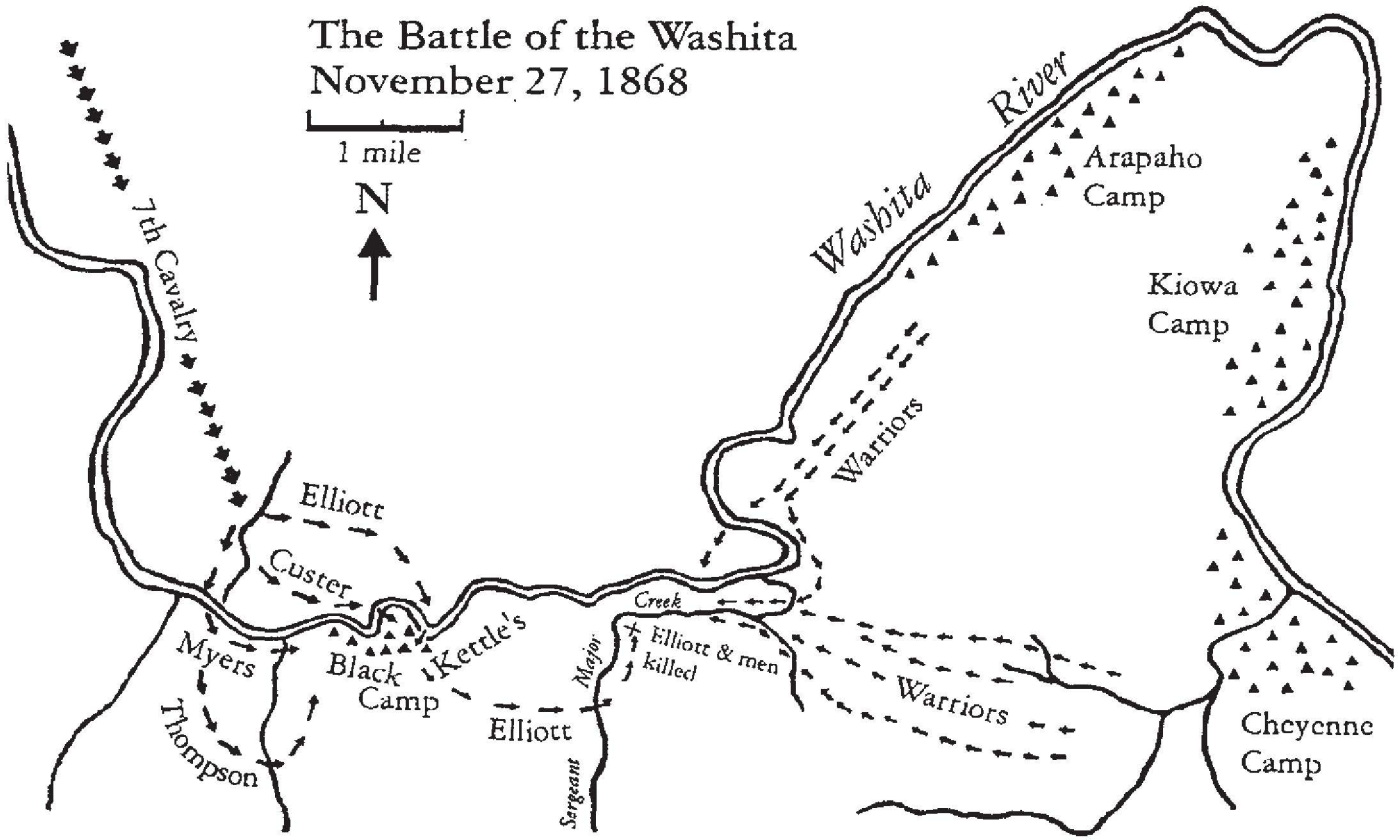


FIGURE 5

Diagram of Washita Conflict

Source: Washita NHS Site Bulletin

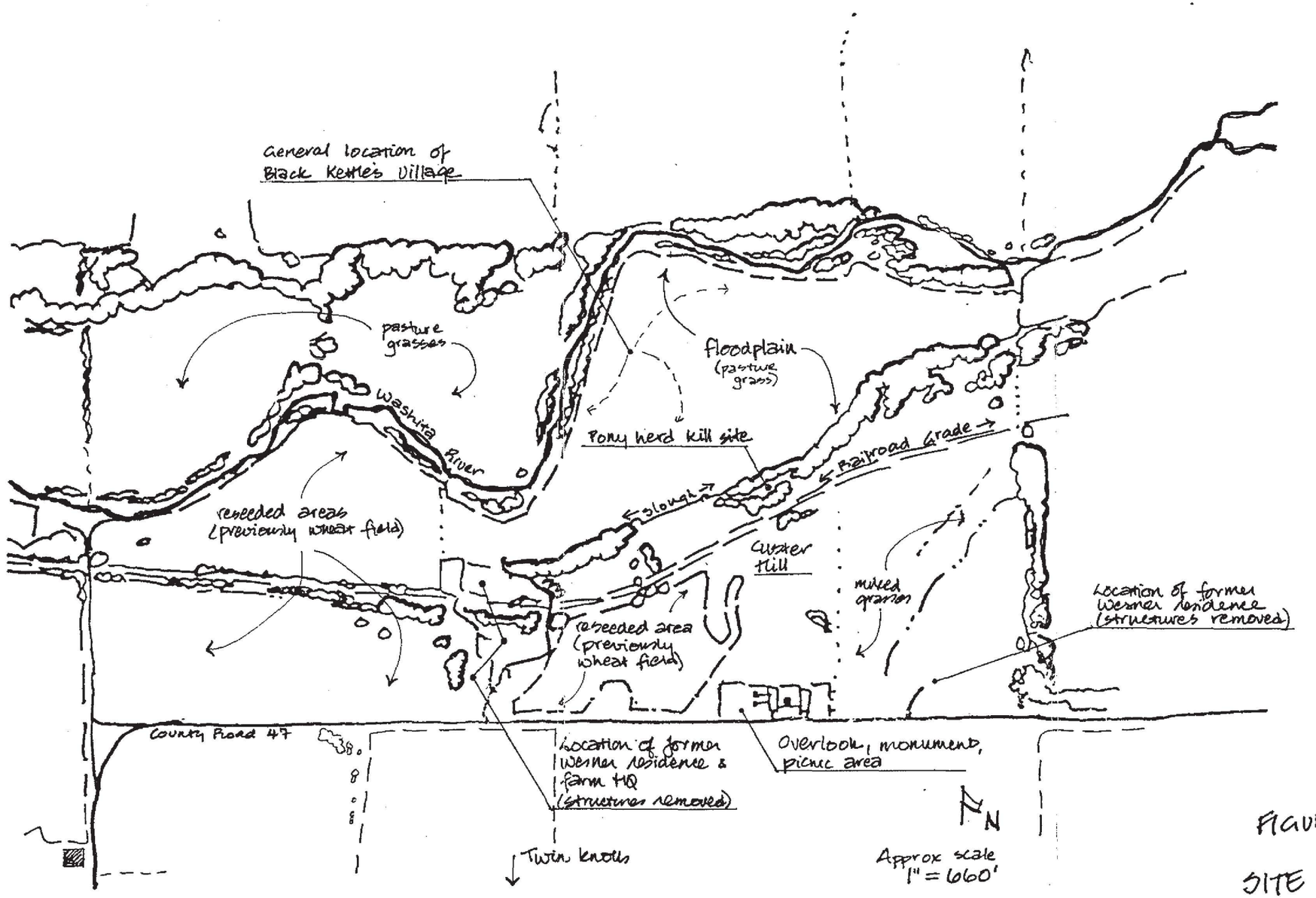


FIGURE 6

SITE PLAN

(EXISTING CONDITIONS- 1998)

Source: USDA aerial, 16 613030 1993-24

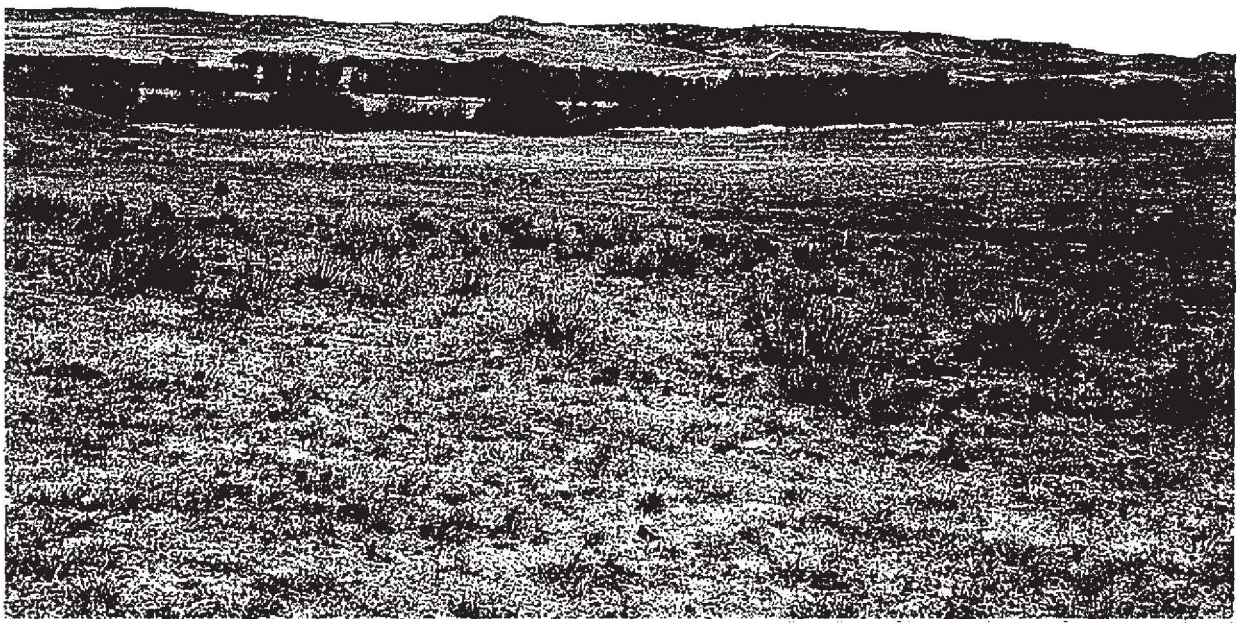


FIGURE 7

LOOKING NORTH, TO RED HILLS

circa 1960s

Source: NHL file



FIGURE 8

LOOKING SOUTH, FROM NORTH OF CORE AREA
circa 1960s

Source: NHL file



FIGURE 9

LOOKING SOUTH TOWARD TWIN KNOLLS

Source: Author photo

Historical Chronology of Related Events and Development

Mapped if blank, tbd	Date(s)	Event
	before early 1800s	First Peoples (Wichitas) occupied region
	mid 1700s – 1840	Post-contact Plains relocations, migrations, and transient population (Comanches, Kiowas, Osages, and Pawnees)
	1830 – 1840	Jacksonian Indian Removal Policy -- eastern tribes moved west into Oklahoma
	early-mid 1800s	Washita area -- Plains tribes traditional use area (wintering, hunting, gathering). The Washita region was the traditional use area for the Kiowa, Comanche, and Plains Apache before 1840 and through the Civil War. The Cheyenne remained north of the Arkansas before their 1840 peace agreement with the Comanche and Kiowa.
some	late 1830s	Anglo-American explorer / naturalist expeditions map, survey and illustrate the region E.g. explorers Randolph and Marcy; naturalists Sibley and Nuttal
	1864	Sand Creek Massacre – Chivington attacks Chief Black Kettle's camp
yes	1865-67	Little Arkansas Treaty -- established first Cheyenne-Arapaho reservation in Indian Territory
	1867	Medicine Lodge Treaties; attempt to restrict Cheyenne, Arapaho, Comanche and Kiowa to reservations
	Nov 1868	Chief Black Kettle meets with Colonel Hazen to try to negotiate peace
	Nov 1868	Chief Black Kettle's band establishes camp along the Washita River
yes	Nov 27, 1868	Battle of the Washita -- "Lt. Colonel George A. Custer, leading the 7th U.S. Cavalry, attacked the sleeping Cheyenne village of Peace Chief Black Kettle. Custer's attack resulted in more than 150 Indian casualties, many of them women and children" (from Washita Legislation)
	March 1869	Cheyenne forced onto reservations
	1869	"Quaker / Grant Peace Policy" -- U.S. government response to outcry over Washita killing; ultimately unsuccessful
yes	1873	Hackbusch cadastral survey (survey notes include observations on

Mapped if blank, tbd	Date(s)	Event
		plants present, width of river)
	1889	Oklahoma or Unassigned Lands Run
	1890	Placement of U.S. Army memorial marker on battle site
	1891-2	Indian Allotment (Darlington Indian Agency)
	1892	Cheyenne-Arapaho Land Run
Yes	1928-9	Panhandle and Santa Fe Railroad line constructed through the core area
	1920s	Wheat boom; major increase in Washita region ploughing and planting
	1930s	Dust Bowl era -- farming and oil fields in decline in Washita region; landowners who farmed/ranched the battlefield area included J.H. Williams
	1930	1890 memorial marker replaced, and the body of a Cheyenne teenage boy, identified by Magpie as Hawk, was reburied at what is now the NHS Overlook and historic marker site. Ceremony conducted on-site, Chief Magpie was present, and helped identify conflict sites (e.g. village location and Chief Black Kettle tree location)
yes	1937	National Park Service Historic Sites Survey completed for the area
yes	1940s	Soil Conservation Service (now Natural Resources Conservation Service or NRCS) restoration projects underway in the region; Black Kettle National Grasslands established
	1940s	Mineral exploration (oil and natural gas) and leasing activity
	1945	John Wesner purchases the core area; Wesner family runs agricultural operation
	1950s	Flood control of Washita River, resulting in bottomland/floodplain being cleared of trees and used for crops/pasture
	1950s	Battle re-enactments start/occur. Private Cheyenne commemorative ceremonies may have started about this time also.
	1958	National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings study completed for the area; one result was Brown 1964 *Special Report on Washita Battlefield*
	1965	Established as a National Historic Landmark, NHL boundaries

Mapped if blank, tbd	Date(s)	Event
		encompass about 12 sq. miles; NHL plaque set up at memorial/overlook location shortly after
	1968	November 26, 1968, two events occurred. Lawrence Hart led a re-interment ceremony at the Black Kettle Museum, to rebury an unidentified Indian individual, who was found in 1934. Also, the U.S. 7th Cavalry Association, out of California, re-enacted the conflict, with 3500 spectators present.
	1970, 1976	National Historic Landmark forms completed
yes	1971	Betty and Dale Wesner take over the property; continuation of agricultural activity with some changes
yes	1980	Brian Wesner residence built in southeast corner of core area
	1983	NHL forms signed; site condition monitored through NHL reports
	1960s	Cheyenne on-site commemoration ceremonies (perhaps earlier?)
Yes	1996	Legislation passed to establish a 326-acre core area as National Historical Site (NPS now owns 315.2 acres); preservation emphasis established
Yes	1997	Core area (315.2 acres) transferred from Oklahoma Historical Society to National Park Service
Yes	1998	Wheat field areas re-seeded
	Nov 1998	First Washita Symposium held in Cheyenne

Landscape History Narrative
(Figures 5, 10-20)

The area that is now known as Western Oklahoma was for centuries used by indigenous people as part of their traditional territories. The First Peoples who occupied this area prior to the early 1800s included the Wichita Tribes. In the early 1800s, the core area was part of a large wintering/hunting area for Plains Tribes, within the greater expanse of their territory. Increasing Anglo-American exploration, settlement, and army presence during the early to mid 1800s increased Anglo-American--Tribal tensions. Starting in the 1830s, a series of treaties were established with Plains Tribes. In 1867, the Medicine Lodge Treaties were established with Plains Chiefs to try to move them to reservations; this effort was for the most part unsuccessful, and conflict continued.

Major General Philip H. Sheridan launched the punitive winter campaign against the Cheyennes and Arapaho in 1868. These tribes were denied sanctuary even though tribal leaders (including Cheyenne Chief Black Kettle) pledged peace. Sheridan's goal was to drive the tribes onto reservations, and to kill those guilty of raiding. At the Battle of Washita, this goal was interpreted differently -- no discrimination was made between the guilty and the innocent, and all tribal members were treated equally.

As part of the winter campaign, Custer's 7th Cavalry marched south from Fort Dodge to establish Camp Supply, then proceeded south to the Antelope Hills, which are northwest of the battlefield area. It was late November, with winter weather.

Meanwhile, Chief Black Kettle's band had set up camp about two to five miles west of other larger Plains tribes' winter camps, in what is now known as the core area. Historic records indicate approximately 51 lodges, 200-300 people, and at least 800 ponies at Chief Black Kettle's camp. At this location, the band was close to the other tribes, close to water, and somewhat sheltered in the river valley, between the low hills.

On the night of November 26, 1868, Custer stopped his 800 men behind a ridge (to the northwest of, and outside the core area) where they waited for daybreak to attack. The 7th Cavalry was divided into four contingents, and attacked the village from all sides. The Cheyenne tried to escape east along or through the river and up the swales and hills to the south. There was scattered fighting and killing throughout the village area and on the hills to the south (within the core area). Historic accounts describe how Chief Black Kettle and his wife, Medicine Woman Later, were killed trying to cross the river. The Cheyenne claim 11 men and 19 women and children killed. An additional 53 women and children were taken prisoner.

Major Elliott and his men went east in pursuit of a group of Cheyenne boys. Arapaho reinforcements came in from the east, and Elliott and his men were overcome and killed. Sergeant Major Kennedy was killed at what is now known as Sergeant Major Creek, to the east of the core area. The 800-head pony herd was slaughtered by the soldiers, with Cheyenne, Arapaho, and members of other tribes watching from nearby hills. The white winter landscape turned red with blood, and the river flowed red. Custer withdrew in the late afternoon, after a

mock attack on the villages to the east. The core area was strewn with dead and with the remains of the village.

Figures 5, 12, 13, 14a, and 14b illustrate historic landscape conditions and activity during the conflict. Figures 10 and 11 show approximate U.S. Army positions.

There is some debate over whether this action should be remembered as a battle or as a massacre. The event was lauded by the army as a victory, and it was a crushing defeat for the Cheyenne. As word of the results of the battle spread among the Plains Tribes, many panicked and dispersed or fled to more isolated areas, and some surrendered at Fort Cobb and elsewhere. Custer, along with Sheridan's force consisting of the 7th Cavalry and 19th Kansas volunteers, returned to the Washita Battle site on December 10 the same year, to assess the results and to look for the bodies of the missing officer and men. Custer continued to pursue the Cheyenne and Arapaho, finally forcing the surviving tribal members to accept reservation confinement.

The Battle of the Washita is accepted as the pivotal event in the Southern Plains "Indian Wars." It crushed the spirit of the Plains tribes, and served as a prototype of winter campaigns which continued through the 1870s and which ended the Plains "war." The battle played an important role in the national moral predicament of treatment of indigenous people; many settlers on the western frontier rejoiced, while many eastern humanitarians demanded more humane treatment of Indian people.

Figures 15-17 are some of the few remaining historic photographs of the Washita area which were taken before the turn of the century. Figure 15, while not of a Cheyenne village, gives an overall impression of a Plains Indian village during this period. The site shown in Figure 16 is recorded as being that of Chief Black Kettle's village, but is difficult to locate on the ground today. Figure 17 shows the Black Kettle Tree in 1891; by the 1930s, this tree had been reduced to a stump, and apparently is no longer present today.

The chronology above outlines events at Washita since the conflict. In 1890, a U.S. Army memorial marker was placed on the hill south of where Chief Black Kettle's band camped (Fig. 18). In 1889, the Oklahoma Land Run vastly increased Anglo-American settlement and agricultural use of the area. This continued throughout the twentieth century. Figure 19 shows the landscape in the 1950s, with agricultural use and several tree-lined flood channels of the Washita River still present. In the 1960s, official interest in preserving the Washita Battlefield area resulted in a number of studies, and in 1996, protective legislation was passed. Figure 20 summarizes changes to the core area landscape up until the 1990s.

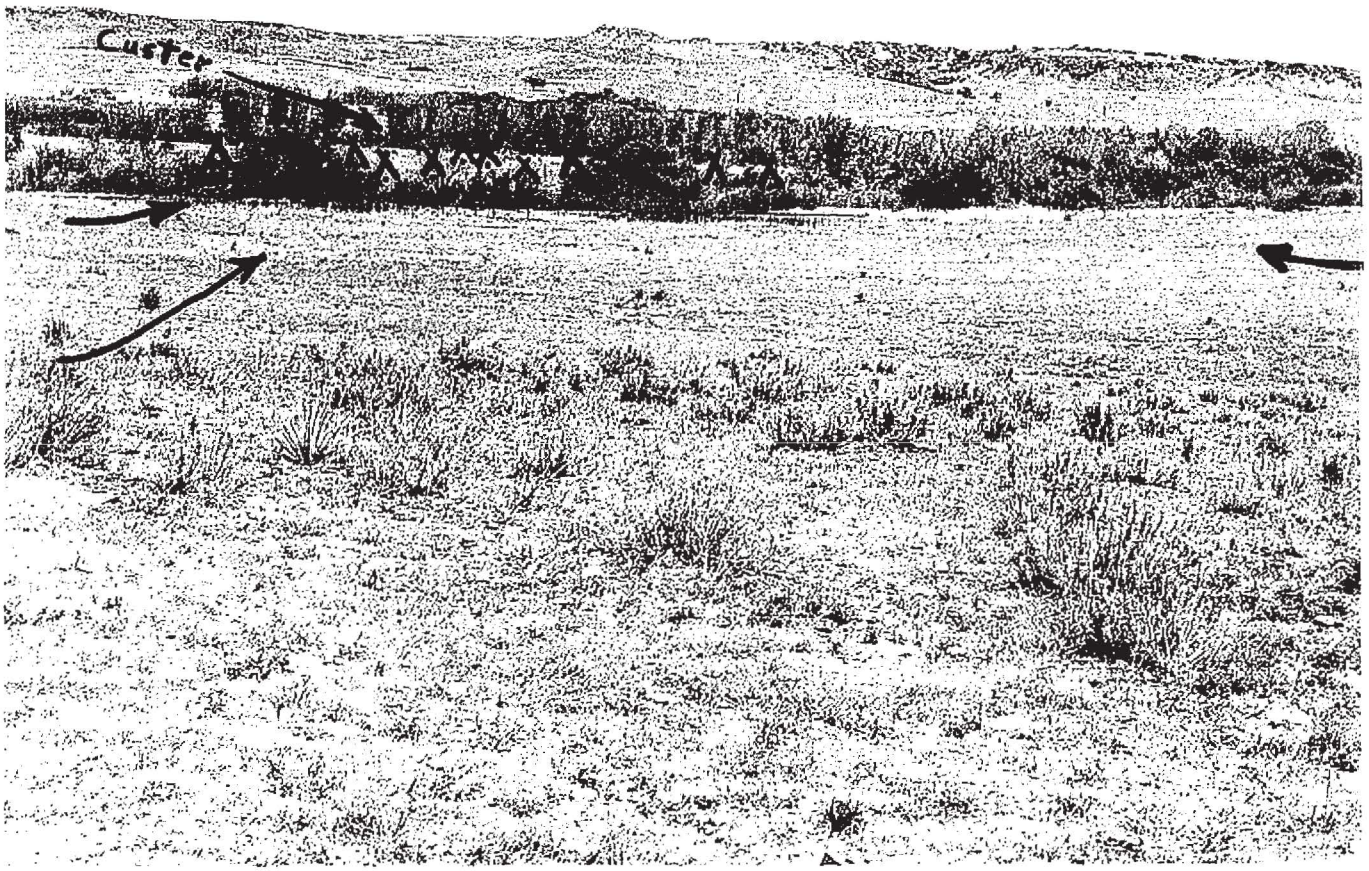


FIGURE 10

U.S. ARMY POSITIONS LOOKING NORTH

Note: Black Kettle's village was actually located a little further east than indicated on this photograph.

Source: N.H.C. files

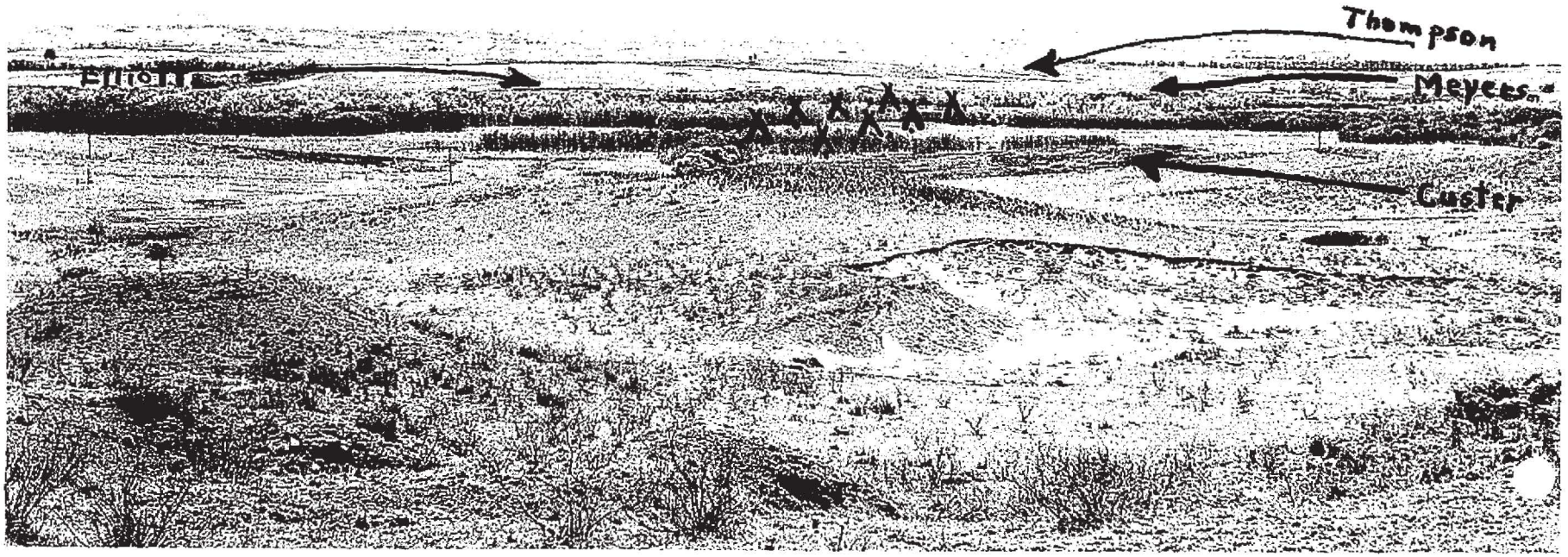


FIGURE 11

U.S. ARMY POSITIONS - 2 Kg South

Note: Village is incorrectly located in this photograph; it should be on the south side of the river.

Source: NHL file

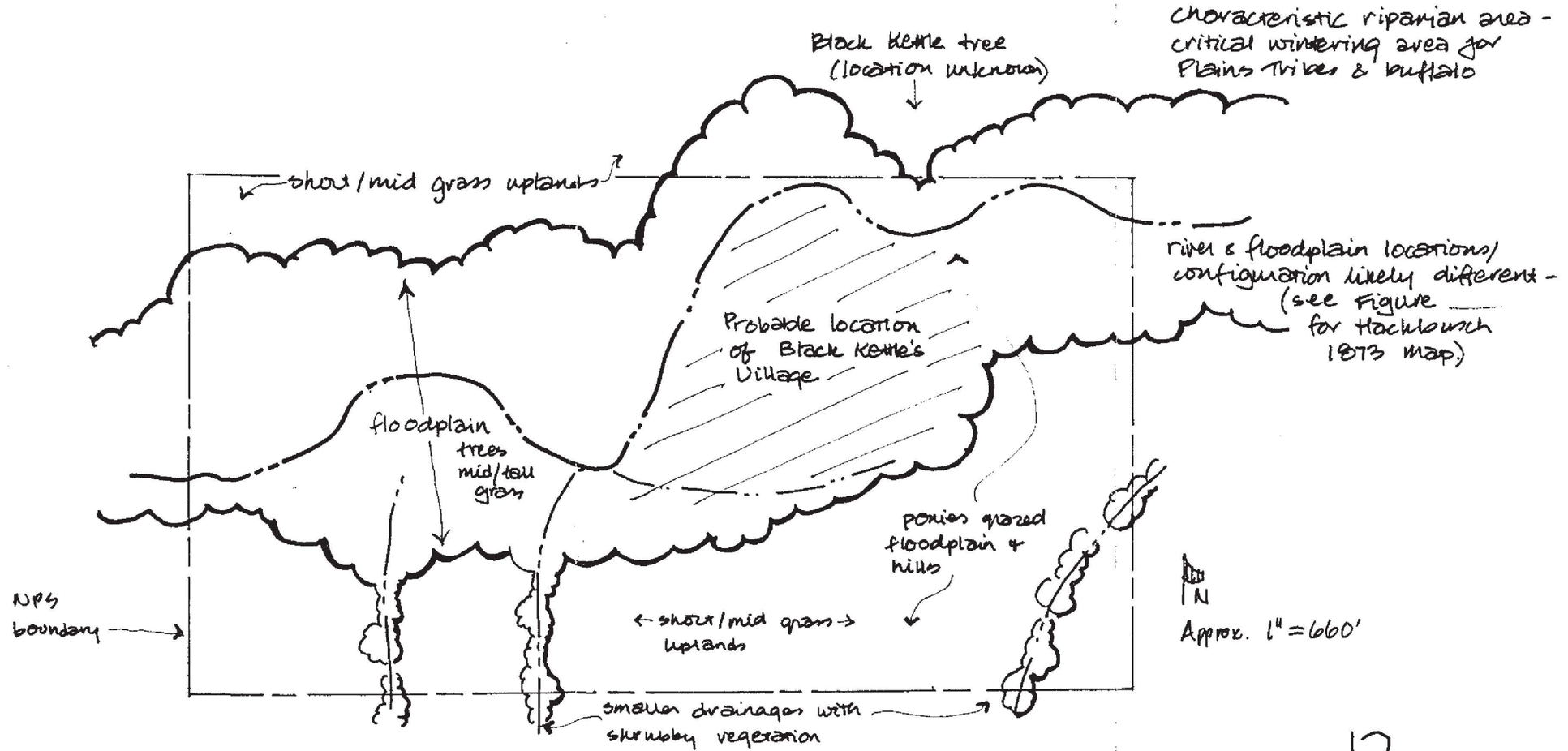
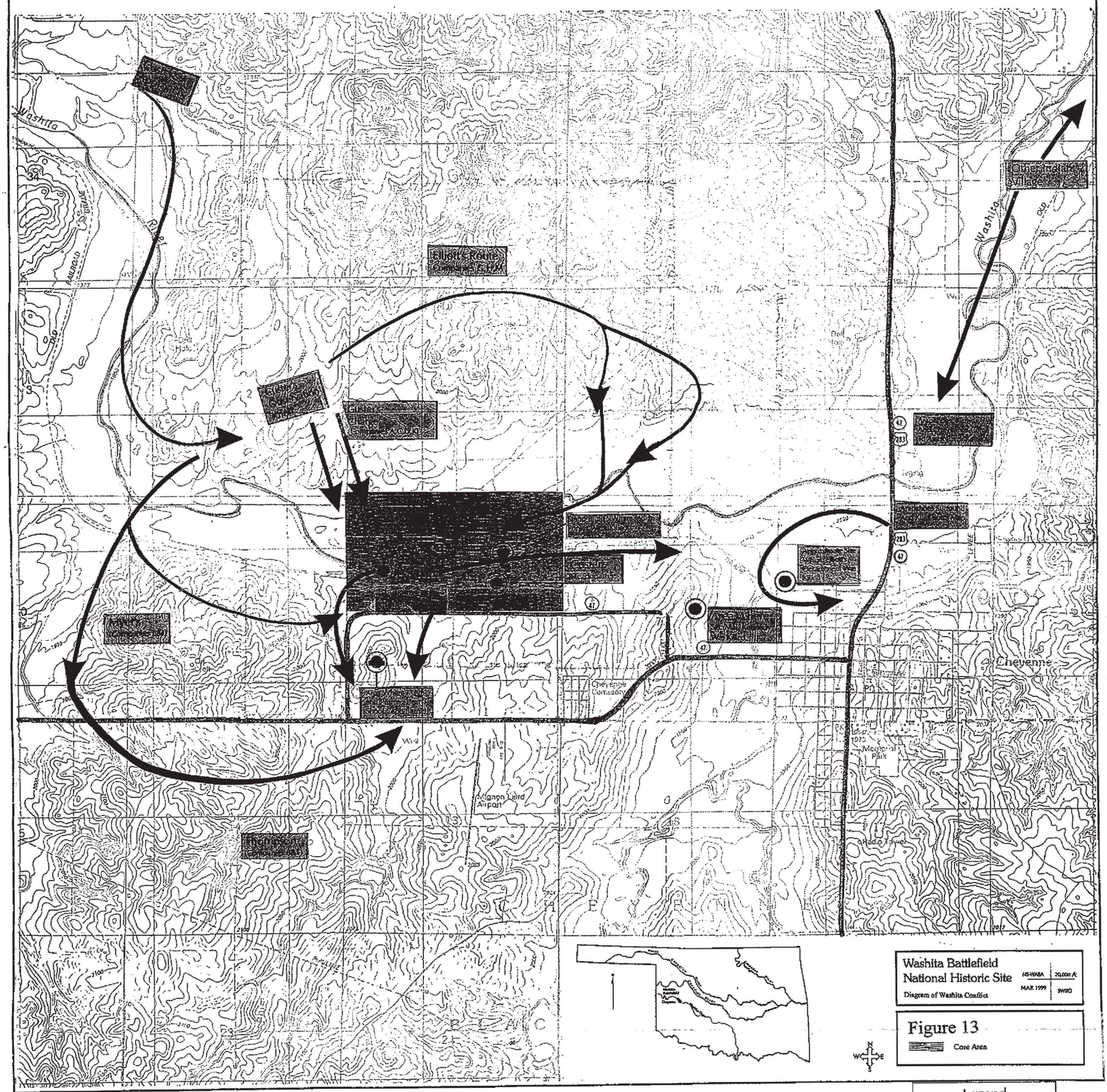


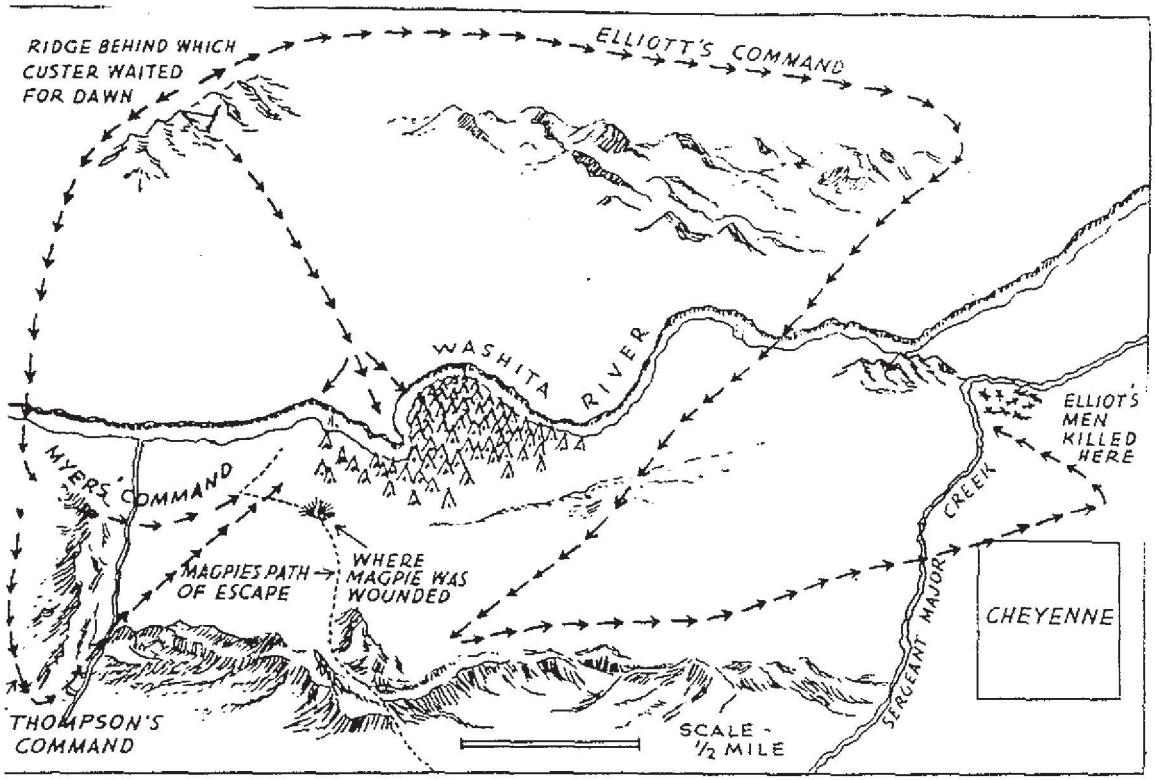
FIGURE 12

SITE PLAN (CONJECTURAL - 1868)

Sources include Haynes, West, Hackbusch, Cht. Magpie, Lees et. al.

Washita Battlefield National Historic Site





The Battle of the Washita
Map compiled by the old Historic Sites Survey (1937)

FIGURE 14a

SKETCH OF WASHITA CONFLICT

Source: 1937 Historic Sites Survey

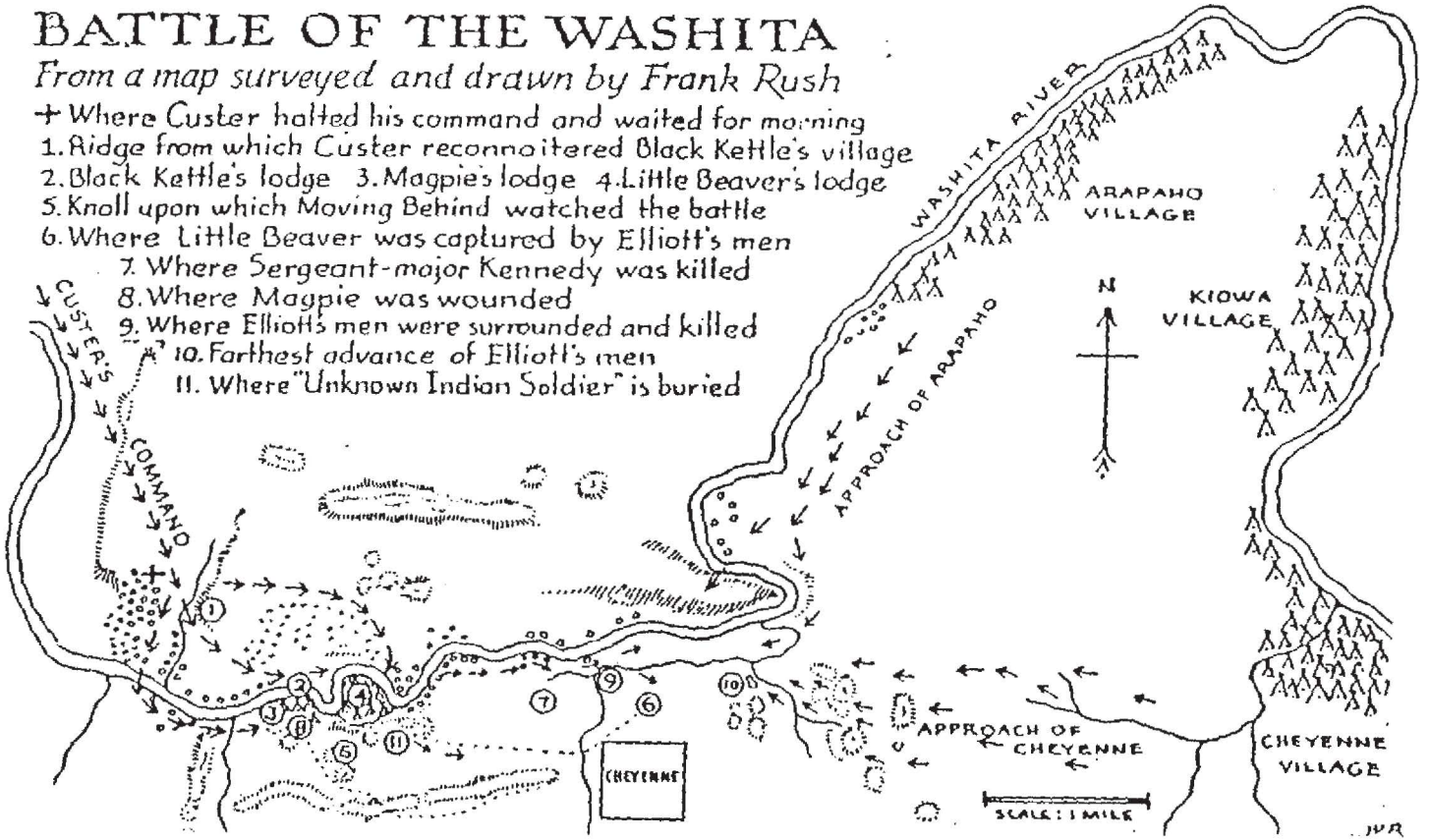


FIGURE 14b

MAP of WASHITA CONFLICT

Source: Brill, 1938



FIGURE 15

QUIR-PAR-KO or LONE WOLF'S CAMP (KIOWA)

The Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology
Negative # 1476-j. (in N.A.I.C. file) W.S. Soule, 1867-74

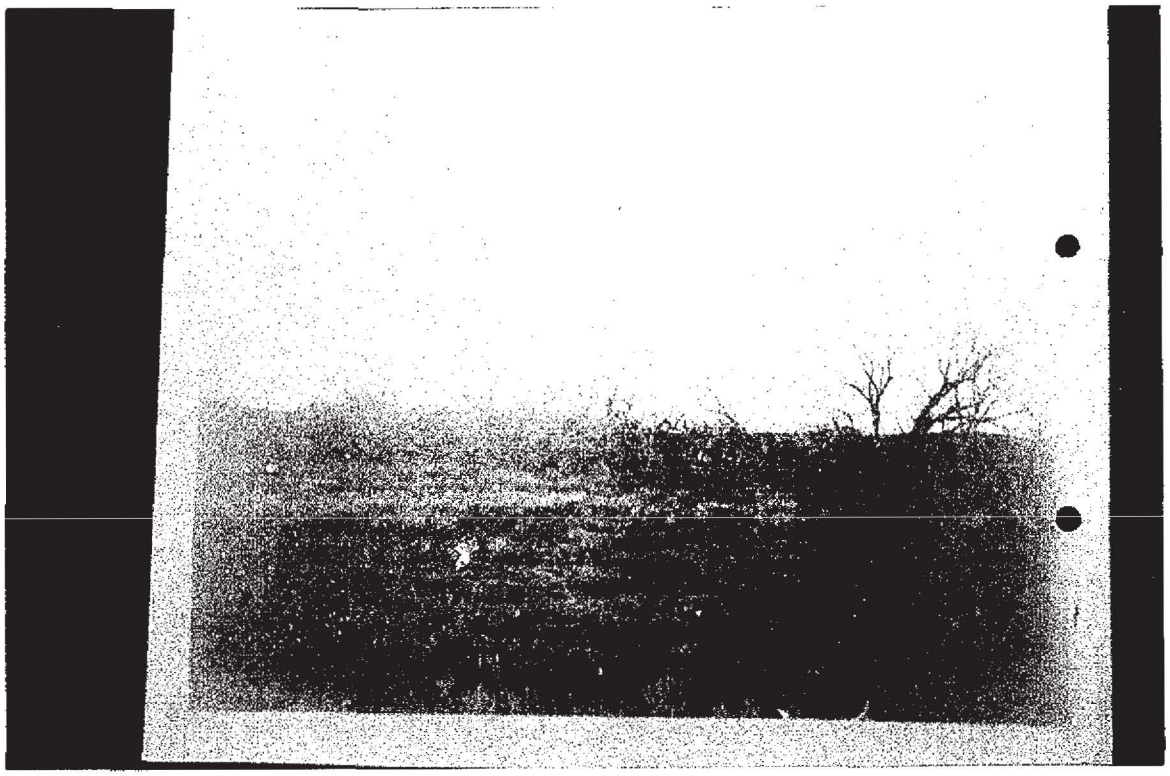


FIGURE 16

SITE of BLACK KETTLE'S VILLAGE - 1891

Hensley Collection, Negative # P-4385
H. Scott, 1891 (in N.H.L. file)



FIGURE 17

BLACK KETTLE TREE

∴ The space in the foreground was occupied by the Cheyenne Lodges when they were attacked by Custer's troopers . . ."

Source: H.L. Scott, 1890 (B. Werner Photo file)



FIGURE 18

WASHITA MONUMENT

Erected by U.S. Army; "Monument indicates the location of the battlefield on the Washita River."

Source: W. S. Scott, 1890 (B. Wesner files)

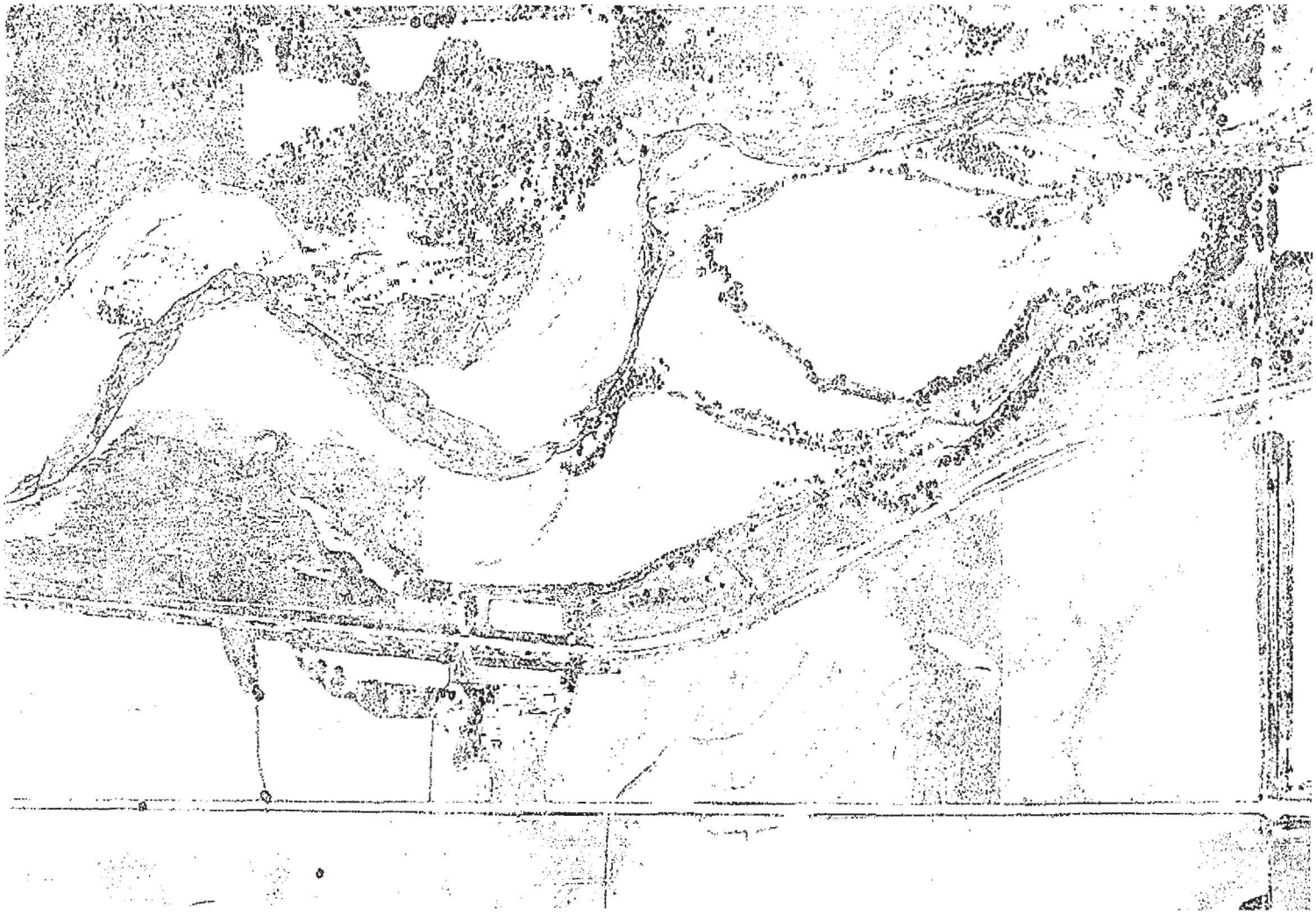
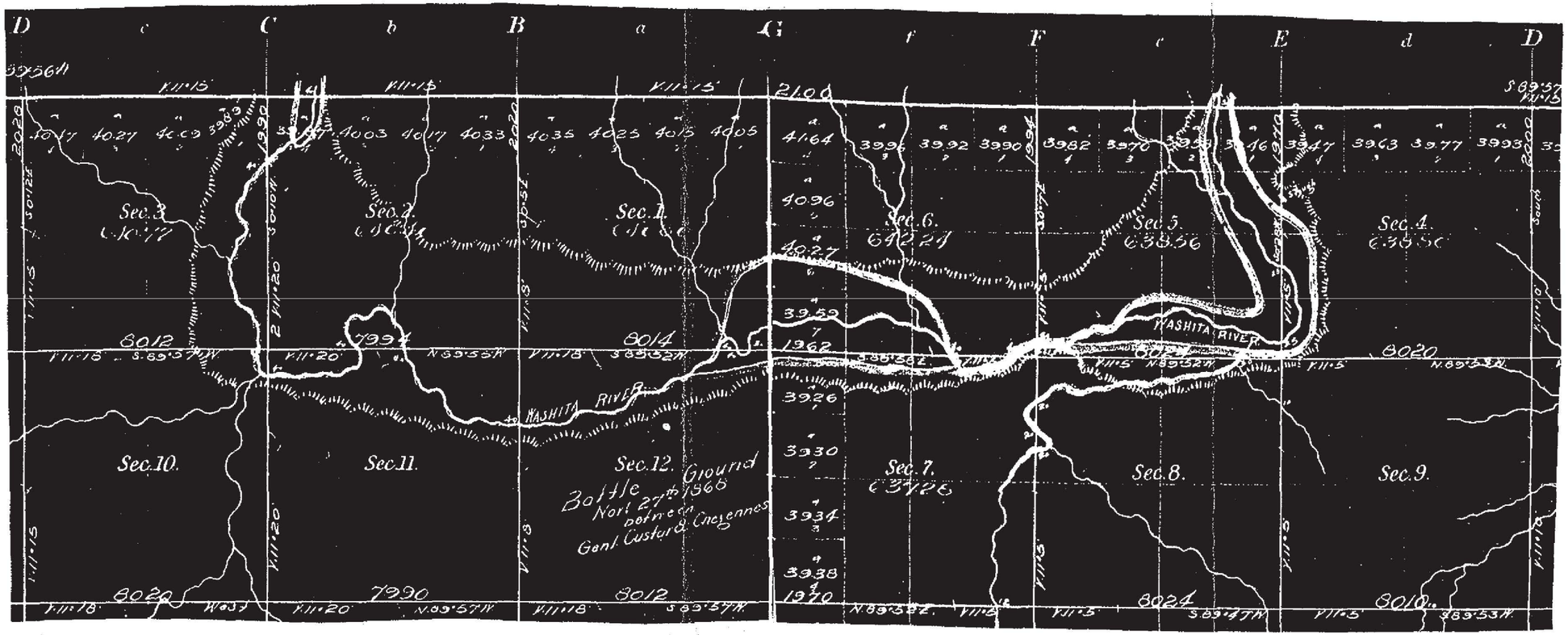


FIGURE 19

WAGUNA LANDSCAPE - 1950

Source: NRCS aerial, 4/25/50



The above Map of Township No. 13 North of Range No. 24 West of the Indian Meridian Indian Territory is strictly conformable to the field notes of the survey thereof on file in this Office, which have been examined and approved.

By Order of the Commissioner of the General Land Office.
(Washington D.C. June 15th 1875)

S. Burch
Commissioner Surv. Gen.

FIGURE 23

HACKBUSCH SURVEY 1873
(excerpt)

Source: Oklahoma Department of Libraries

Statement of Significance and Integrity

Significance

Washita is a sacred place with ongoing spiritual value. The Washita landscape is significant as the location of the nationally significant event -- the Battle of the Washita. Existing landforms, vegetation, and other contributing landscape elements derive their significance from their association with this event. The core area is significant as the place where the traumatic event took place, and where the memory of the event, and its aftermath, is embedded. The river corridor, low-lying floodplain and grassy hills of the core area are significant as part of the overall battlefield (NHL). The core area is the place which has been set aside to preserve the memory of the conflict and to honor those who died and whose lives were permanently affected by this event.

From the legislation:

". .the Battle of the Washita was one of the largest engagements between Plains tribes and the U.S. Army on the Southern Great Plains. The site is a registered National Historic Landmark.
". . the Battle of the Washita symbolizes the struggle of the Southern Great Plains tribes to maintain their traditional lifeways and not to submit to reservation confinement"
". .the importance of the Battle of the Washita as a nationally significant element of frontier military history and as a symbol of the struggles of the Southern Great Plains tribes to maintain control of their traditional use areas"
(see also 1976 NHL form)

From legislative testimony:

From the Statement of Chief Lawrence H. Hart, Southern Cheyenne Tribe, July 18, 1998:
". .There is not one Cheyenne person in Western Oklahoma who does not have any connection to the event of November 27, 1868. All the Cheyenne Indian people are linear descendants or have some relationship to those who were victims or those who survived the so-called battle. Furthermore, all of us have oral tradition stories we have imbedded in our minds passed down to us three, four, five or more generations. As the drafted Bill indicates, this historic event represents an important milestone in the history of the Plains Indian relations. It is indeed a milestone in Cheyenne Indian history, but it is not the only one . . . . . Cherishing children. That in essence, was the view of Black Kettle. That's why he was motivated to go to Camp Weld, near Denver in September of 1864. That's why he signed the Treaty of Little Arkansas just a year after Sand Creek. That's why he signed the Treaty of Medicine Lodge in 1867. That's why he went to Fort Cobb to seek assurance. That's why the Dog Soldiers were opposed to his actions following Sand Creek. That's why he was asked to take his band and camp separate from the main Cheyenne Indian Village in November of 1868. His village was beyond that of the Arapaho, who always camped separately from the Cheyenne. That's why Black Kettle's village was highly vulnerable. November 27, 1868 was the last day in the life of this great peace chief . . . This and other stories need to be told . . . Above all else, a National Park can be of great benefit educationally to all of us and to future generations."

From the Statement of Jerry Rogers, Associate Director for Cultural Resources, National Park Service, July 29, 1994: "The Washita National Historic Site would preserve significant resources related to one of the largest battles between Plains Indian tribes and the United States Army on the Southern Plains. This encounter, one of the most controversial in the nation's efforts to subjugate Native tribes, is perceived by many historians as the slaughter of noncombatant women and children asleep in their lodges. . . In the broadest context, the Battle of the Washita can be interpreted as a conflict of cultures . . (it) remains as a tragic, classic example of the cultural failings involving American Indians and whites."

From the Statement of Dr. Robert Blackburn, Deputy Director, Oklahoma Historical Society, July 29, 1994: "On the heels of the Reconstructive Treaties came the military offensive to clear the Southern Plains of nomadic tribes such as the Kiowa, Comanche, Arapaho, and Cheyenne. Again, it was an attempt to open the last frontier to white settlers. The first major battle in this new crusade was Custer's attack on Black Kettle's village on the Washita River. It was the inaugural test of General Phil Sheridan's winter campaign, designed to defeat and demoralize the Plains Indians. It worked all too well. The attack on Black Kettle's village was the beginning of the end for the nomadic way of life of the Southern Plains and the beginning of reservation life with all the attendant features of punishment, abuse, and attempts at cultural genocide--an American version of the Holocaust."

From members of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes (summarized from meeting presentations and notes):

The Washita landscape has deep emotional associations for many members of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes. Accounts of the conflict from relatives who survived the event have emotional immediacy. Some members feel it is very important not to disturb the area, because the spirits of those who died there still inhabit the landscape. For many, Washita means more in terms of the conflict's effect on the people involved than in terms of military history. The conflict at Washita was an atrocity, and learning the associated stories is part of the healing process. (L. Hart, J. BigMedicine, G. Yellowman)

Washita can be thought of as representing:

Warriors (Cheyenne/Arapaho, Dog Soldiers, War Society Members / Soldier Society members)
Army (Custer, U.S. Govt)
Scouts (Osage, Ben Clark)
Sacred/Spiritual place
Harmony (land, river, water, air, plants, buffalo - i.e. all natural elements, which have spiritual meaning)
Innocence (women, children, elders, all non-combatants)
Troops (U.S. soldiers)
Attack (the attack on a people and whole culture, the killing and trauma)
(From G. Yellowman)

Notes on above outline: Comanche and Kiowa warriors were also involved in repelling Custer's attack. Romero, one of Custer's Scouts, played a prominent role in the attack and later married into the Cheyenne Tribe. Romero was Mexican; there were many adopted Mexican captives among the tribes. Several were warriors who took an active role in the Plains Wars on the Indian side.

Research indicated that, for some Cheyenne and Arapaho, the site is recognized as the location of a historic event but was not historically or traditionally an annual camping location for the Cheyenne or Arapaho; however, it was a Kiowa hunting area.

Additional information regarding the importance of the Washita site to Tribal and non-Tribal communities may be found in the Cheyenne Oral History Study (Warde 1999) and the Washita Ethnographic Study (in progress).

National Register significance criteria:

Washita is nationally significant as a cultural landscape in addition to its significance as a National Historic Landmark site. As a cultural landscape, Washita is significant under Criteria A, B and D. Under Criterion A, the Washita landscape is significant as the location of the Battle of the Washita. Under Criterion B, the Washita landscape is significant for its association with General Custer, Chief Black Kettle, and other significant persons. Under Criterion D, the Washita landscape is significant for its potential to provide further information on the conflict itself, on the impacts and implications of the conflict, on the contemporary and historic natural environment, and on ethnographic associations with the landscape.

On this basis, it is recommended that the existing nomination for Washita be revised to more fully incorporate landscape values. Also, the property category can be changed to district.

Integrity

Integrity is the ability of the landscape to convey its significance. For Washita, as a historic site and ethnographic landscape, integrity is determined by comparing historic and contemporary conditions, and by determining ethnographic values and whether traditionally associated communities consider the area to retain integrity. The following integrity evaluation is based primarily on historic significance since ethnographic studies have not yet been completed.

The overall integrity rating for the core area is high (out of high, medium and low). While post-conflict alterations have been made (e.g. establishment of crop areas, terracing slopes, tree clearing in floodplain area, flood control of river, introduction of exotic/weed plant species, construction of railroad grade, development of residential/agricultural complexes), the physical landscape is substantially intact, and feeling and historic associations are strong. The following evaluation uses National Register integrity criteria,(location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association), substituting or adding Firth's criteria for biotic landscape

resources (community organization, species composition, and land management techniques) as needed (Firth 1985).

Location: The place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.

Integrity of location is high. Even though conclusive physical evidence that Chief Black Kettle's village was located as shown on Figure 6 has not yet surfaced, historic records and oral histories indicate with some confidence that the core area is the location of the village and the most intense activity of the Washita conflict. Topographic features important to the historic event are substantially intact, and historic locations (e.g. village area, pony herd kill site, Custer hill) are identified and visible.

Setting: The physical environment of the historic landscape; the character of the place in which the property played its historical role.

Integrity of setting is high. The immediate and adjacent setting of the Washita core area is the entire area of the NHL Battlefield. While this area has changed since 1868 with the introduction of agricultural uses, it retains a rural and relatively undeveloped character. Views from the core area out to areas of the larger Battlefield are for the most part unobstructed. The general region also retains a rural character, with the exception of the town of Cheyenne.

Design / Community Organization: Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property. Community Organization is the organization of an ecological community in terms of the size, structure, and distribution of each of its plant and animal populations, plus the cyclical patterns in these characteristics.

Since the significance of this landscape relates primarily to its relatively unmanipulated state in 1868, Community Organization is more relevant than Design. Integrity of Community Organization is medium. This assessment is based on the evidence of changes in size and population structure of plant and animal species, and changes in distribution, primarily due to agricultural activity since 1868.

Materials / Species Composition: Materials are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property. Species Composition focuses on the dominant native and introduced plant and animal species.

The integrity of Materials / Species Composition is medium. While the core area is substantially intact, physical elements (the river, landforms, soils) have been somewhat altered since 1868, with flood control and channelization of the river, agricultural terracing and the development of the railroad grade. Specific dominant plant and animal species have also changed.

Workmanship / Management Techniques: Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during the historic period.

Since results of landscape modification techniques is not a significant landscape characteristic, this factor has limited applicability to Washita. Agricultural land management techniques date to after the historic period. While the one historic structural feature -- the 1930s replacement of the 1890 U.S. Army monument -- has high integrity, the integrity of this feature does not determine the integrity of the landscape.

Feeling: Feeling refers to a landscape's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. Feeling results from the on-site presence of physical features, and from continuing values and meanings of the place alive in contemporary communities; these, taken together, convey the landscape's historic character.

The integrity of feeling is high. Even with remaining physical evidence of agricultural and railroad uses, the Washita core area landscape retains a strong sense of the past. Key physical elements are still present, and the meaning of the Washita landscape is very much alive in the memories of both traditionally-associated and other groups today. Evidences of this include: the on-going interest in the historic event and the landscape, and the setting aside of the core area for preservation; the impassioned talks given at the November 1998 Washita Symposium; and the Washita Trail Guide which communicates to visitors what on-site behavior is appropriate, given the sacredness of the Washita landscape.

Association: The direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic landscape.

The integrity of association is high. The Washita core area landscape is definitively associated with the Washita conflict, the specific people involved, and the aftermath of the event through historical documentation, oral histories, on-site archeological findings, and personal testimonies.

Also, the association between contemporary traditionally-associated communities (and non-traditionally-associated communities) and the landscape of the core area is high, as discussed in the Statement of Significance section. The Oral History project (Warde 1999) provides more information, and future ethnographic studies will elaborate.

List of Primary Contributing Landscape Characteristics and Features

Features within core area only are included. Locations of most features is shown on Figure 6, 1998 Site Plan.

Contributing Landscape Features (biotic and abiotic)

Washita River (Figs 24,25,26,27,49)

Riparian / floodplain ecosystem (vegetation and wildlife characteristic of historic period) (Figs. 28,29,48,50)

Uplands ecosystems (vegetation and wildlife characteristic of the historic period) (Figs. 55,56,57)

Topography reflecting 1868 conditions, and specific topographic features associated with conflict (Figs. 10,11, 32,35,40,57)

1930 replacement of original 1890 Monument (Fig. 59)

Chief Black Kettle's village - location, remains/artifacts, archeological evidence

Specific historic locations (Village location, Pony Herd Kill site, Custer Hill) (Figs. 33,34,35)

All in-situ artifacts from the battle

Views and visual connections critical to outcome of battle (Fig. 42)

Routes across landscape associated with battle (Fig. 13)

All village and battle-related archeological sites

Other markers/memorials/shrines - tbd

Lack of evidence of modern development - (noises, smells, air quality, night sky visibility)

Black Kettle tree location - tbd (Fig. 17)

Places and/or resources associated with stories/songs about the battle and aftermath (tbd)

The National Historic Landmark marker and granite State memorial are not "contributing"; that is, they are not historic resources directly associated with the event. However, neither are they "noncontributing", because they do add to the meaning of the place and do reflect post-event commemorative efforts. Because they are features integral to the overall landscape (district), National Register Criteria Consideration F (Commemorative Properties required to be over 50 years old) does not apply, and therefore they can be preserved as features relating to the historic event.

Non-Contributing Features (biotic and abiotic):

Topographic, vegetative, and structural elements that do not relate to the significance of the area include:

--Fencing and other structural remains associated with 19th and 20th century Anglo-American settlement and agriculture, or structures associated with educational/recreational development (e.g. picnic facilities), unless they have ethnographic value;

--Railroad grade, agricultural terracing, and any other topographical modifications not associated with Washita's significance and which do not have ethnographic value;

--Non-native/introduced vegetation that, based on historic/ethnographic evidence, is not believed to have been present on-site in 1868 and/or is not believed to be associated with the area's ethnographic significance. *(Note: See Warde 1999 for information on vegetation with potential ethnographic value. The on-going Washita Ethnographic Study may also provide information on historic ethnographic vegetation, or on any vegetation types or species that were not believed to be present during 1868 but that nevertheless have contemporary ethnographic value. Potentially sensitive ethnographic information will not be entered into the CLI database)*

Analysis and Evaluation

Summary

This section is used to identify contributing landscape characteristics within the core area. Landscape characteristics include both processes and physical forms, and the relationships between these. Those characteristics identified below as important or contributing are those which need to be preserved and maintained to retain the landscape's significance and integrity.

In the case of Washita, where historical significance is associated with a specific event and it's aftermath, determination of contributing landscape characteristics is in large part a matter of comparing historic and contemporary conditions. As oral history and ethnographic work is completed and as more detail on likely conditions in 1868 is researched, other events or elements may come to light which need to be considered, and this section may need to be modified.

Relationships between characteristics are also important. Natural Systems and Features, Vegetation, Fauna, Land Use and Cultural Traditions together define the overall human ecology of the area, both during the historic period and during later periods.

Overall, contributing landscape characteristics at Washita are those which relate directly to landscape conditions in 1868, activities during the conflict, or on-going ethnographic and/or commemorative value of the site. Thus, landform, vegetation and wildlife characteristic of southern prairie ecosystems in the late 1800s, specific places and natural elements associated with the conflict, and commemorative features are contributing, while modifications related to agricultural or recreational development are noncontributing.

See Statement of Significance section for Integrity evaluation.

Spatial Organization

(Figs. 11,13,21,22)

During the 1860s, before the battle, the spatial organization of the study area was determined primarily according to the natural environment - i.e. the location of the river, the extent of the riparian vegetation, the topography, and other vegetation present. The riparian zone would have been spatially enclosed by the tree canopy; the upland areas generally open, divided to some degree by drainages leading down to the river and the associated shrubby riparian zone vegetation. Typical of prairie landscape of the region, the vegetated riparian area would have contrasted significantly with the more open uplands. Overall, the riparian and floodplain areas were, as they are today, surrounded and partially enclosed most directly by the escarpment defining the floodplain on the south, and at a greater distance by the hills to the north and the upland slope further to the south (see cross section sketches).

In the course of the conflict, the natural environment determined battle movements to a large degree, and different individuals and groups involved in the battle used different spaces and locations within the landscape as part of their attack or retreat (see Topography and Circulation sections). As shown in Fig. 13, those in the village by the river were at a tactical disadvantage compared to the troops who approached from the surrounding higher ground and encircled the village. Key conflict locations within the core area include the Cheyenne village site/area, Custer Command post/Custer Hill, and the Pony Herd Kill site.

Since 1868, the spatial organization of the study area has been substantially modified, with agricultural and residential development, and with the introduction of the railroad. The once-open uplands areas have been terraced and compartmentalized into agricultural fields and pastures, which are separated by fences, the railroad grade, farm roads, and bands of vegetation (e.g. shelter belt tree plantings) (Figs. 11, 21). Edges between vegetation types are more rectilinear and more distinct, with the division of space into fields and pastures, and with the substantial reduction of the riparian area. With the development of the residential/farming complex and the monument/picnic area on the slope south of the river, the focus of human activity has changed from the floodplain (village location) to the uplands (Wesner complex/State monument area). The railroad grade cuts through the area, dividing the site into north and south sections and interrupting drainage patterns in a way uncharacteristic of 1868 conditions.

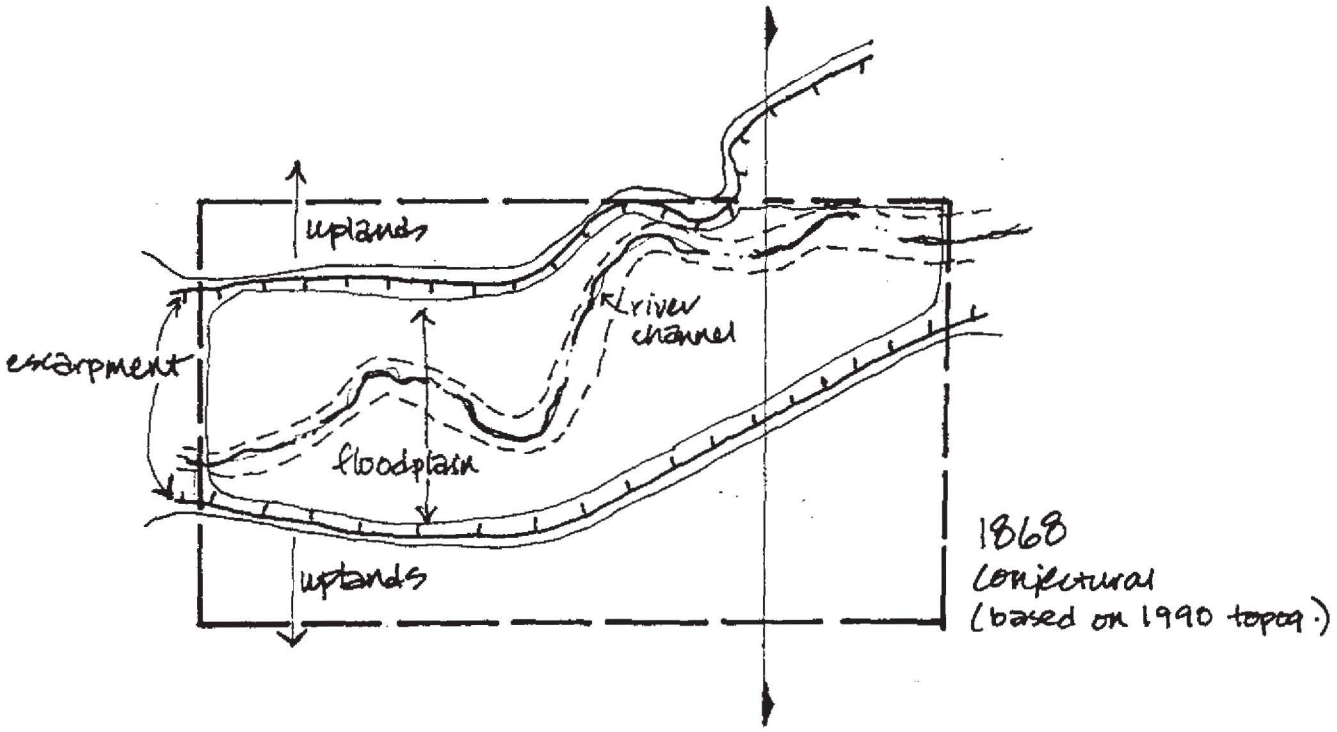
The exact locations of the Washita River and Chief Black Kettle's Village in 1868 are not known at this time; on-going research is addressing this question (Lees et. al., 1997).

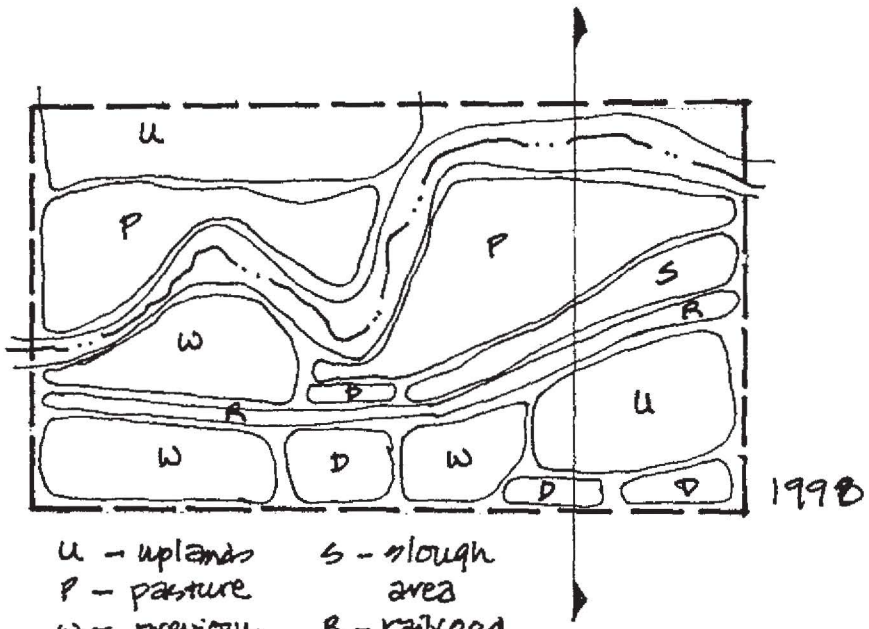
Contributing: basic contrast between protected river valley (riparian zone) and exposed upland areas, natural and irregular divisions of space by vegetation and topography, gradual transition of vegetation from riverside to floodplain to upland types, openness of uplands interrupted only by minor drainages; taller vegetation in the riparian/floodplain area, and lower vegetation in the upland areas
Non-contributing: division of space along the contour (e.g. railroad grade) rather than up and down the slopes; rectilinear division of space; division of spaces by fences and permanent structures; taller trees in upland areas

Natural Systems and Features

(Figs. 11,19,20,23-30)

The Washita River, the dominant and defining natural feature within the core area, was called the Lodge Pole River by the Cheyenne (Hart, pers. comm). The river flows east into the Red River and has over time eroded the terraces and river channel, determining floodplain patterns and thus establishing the basic topographic relationships. Elevations at the core area range from 1935 to 2000 feet. The course and flow of the river has influenced the nature and extent of the riparian zone. According to Rea, 1997, "Drawing upon the maps and aerial photography, it appears the channel enters and leaves Section 12, 13-24 much as it did in 1868. It is between these points that the channel appears to have changed" (p.14). The 1873 Hackbusch survey maps shown in Figure 23, compared with Figures 11, 19 and 20, indicate that the river now has more pronounced meanders than it did in the late 1800s. A number of



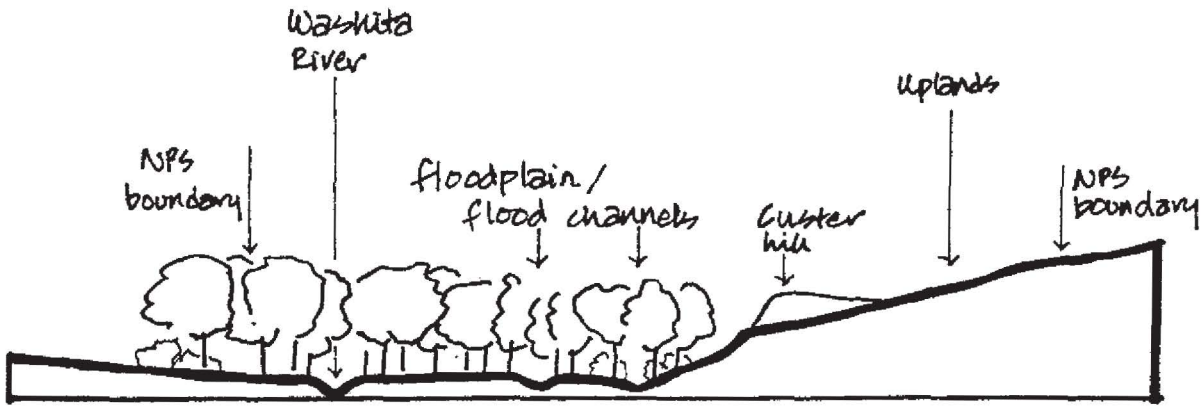


U – uplands
P – pasture
W – previous wheatfield
D – developed, or previously developed
S – slough area
R – railroad grade

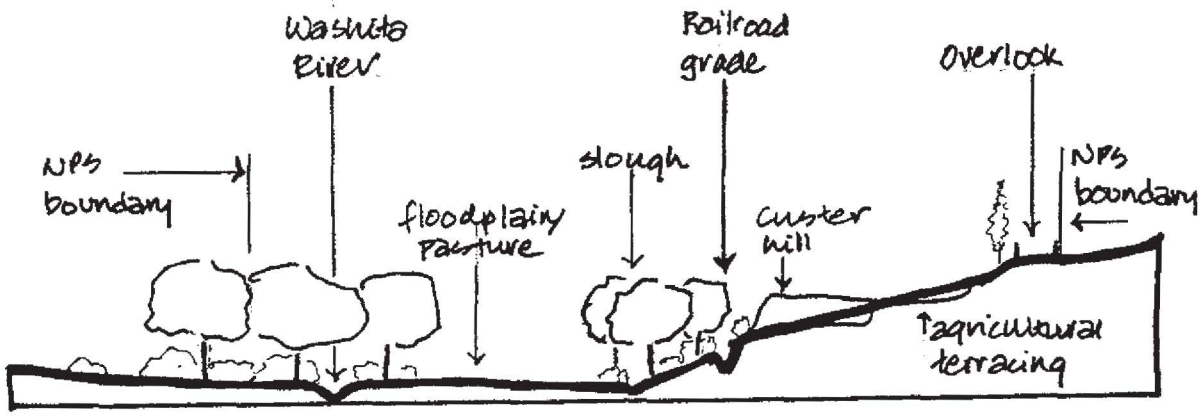
FIGURE 21

SPATIAL ORGANIZATION (plan)

Sources: various



(vertical exaggeration x 14) 1868 (conjectural)



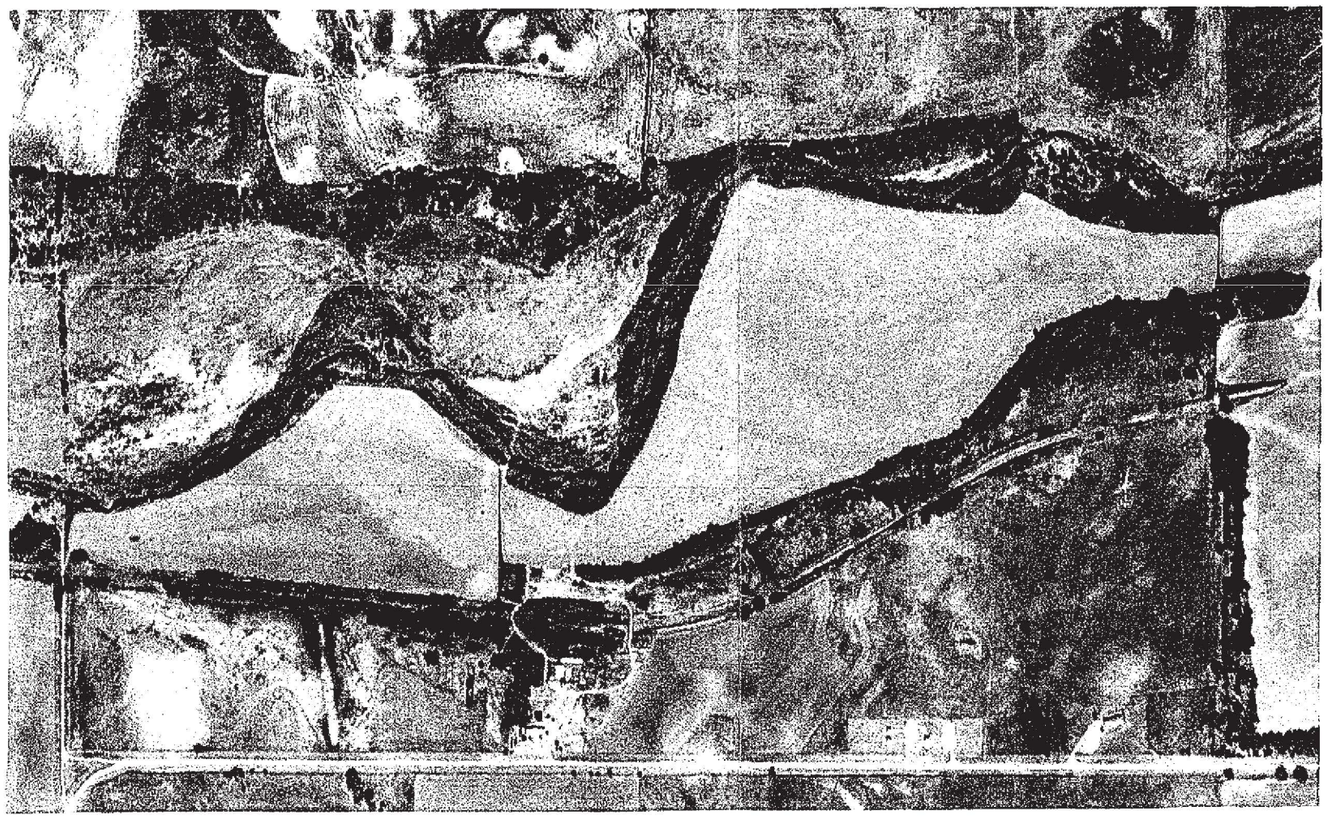
(Vertical exaggeration x14) 1998

FIGURE 22

SPATIAL ORGANIZATION (cross section)

see Fig 21 for section location

Sources: various



Changes since 1868 include:

Spatial Organization:
--compartmentalized and fenced for agricultural use
--edges between riparian and upland areas more distinct
--terracing/grading sharpens edge between floodplain and benches

Topography:
--river channelized, overall location possibly further north
--irrigation channels developed
--railroad grade (berm/ditch) - since 1929
--agricultural terracing, removal of hillocks

Vegetation:
--characteristic prairie riparian vegetation greatly reduced
--introduction of non-native grasses, crops, ornamental plants, shelter belt trees

Structures:
--memorial -- 1890
--agricultural development - since early 1900s
--Overlook facilities - 1960s

FIGURE 20

SUMMARY OF LANDSCAPE CHANGES

Photo source: USDA Aerial: 16 613030 1993-24

relatively shallow, intermittent drainages lead down into the river, as they did during the 1860s. Construction of check dams upstream has modified river volume and flow.

The width of the south floodplain has apparently been reduced over time. Up until about the 1950s, the river flooded regularly from 1/4 to 1/2 mile south of its banks, i.e. extending to the present slough or escarpment. After the introduction of flood control on the Washita and the establishment of the main river channel, the secondary channel, and the pasture area, the river rarely floods the extent of the original floodplain (Brian Wesner, pers. comm.) (Figs. 24-29).

See Topography and Vegetation sections for more details on natural systems. See also Haynes 1998 for more detail on geomorphology and river channel shifting. Figure 30 lists soil types within the core area, i.e. mostly fine sandy loams (from Stotts & DuBey 1998, pp. 9 & 10).

Contributing: The Washita River, with high water quality and more extensive associated riparian zone. (While the Washita River as a free-flowing, naturally flooding river is contributing in terms of 1868 conditions, it may not be realistic to restore this condition). See Vegetation section below for more details on general ecology of the area.
Noncontributing: Vegetation that has been introduced since the 1868s, e.g. that associated with agriculture or introduced ornamentals; constricted riparian zone; agricultural terracing and railroad grade.

Response to the natural environment: The Cheyenne winter camp was probably located in this area due to the proximity to water, availability of timber for fuel, shelter from the wind provided by the tree canopy, and some available forage for the ponies (mid-tall grasses) (West, 1995, p. 25). Later, river channelization, terracing, and tree clearing were carried out to make agricultural production more viable.

Topography
(Figs. 22, 31)

From Lees et. al. 1997 (draft), p. 29 (C. Vance Haynes chapter):
"Whereas the floodplain of the Washita River may have undergone modification by fluvial processes since 1868, the overall site topography has changed very little and has not been significantly altered by agricultural activity. Therefore, the terrain today still reflects the terrain that existed during the engagement of November 27, 1868, keeping in mind that the position of the river with respect to the floodplain is not the same because this relationship is ever changing". That is, while upper terraces have remained fairly constant, some changes have occurred in last 150 years to the floodplain (lowest alluvial terrace) from flood events and shifting river channel.

During the conflict, U.S. forces used ridge lines or escarpments for shelter and to prevent the Cheyenne from escaping, thus the Cheyenne were mostly trapped in the valley. High points were used as lookouts -- within the core area is included a knoll identified as Custer Hill (Figs. 11, 13). Other lookout spots are located on adjacent lands. Within the core area, drainages

were used as routes of retreat and as hiding places by the Cheyenne, and as attack routes by the pursuing U.S. forces. According to Rea (1997) a number of ravines that were deep in 1868 have since filled in.

Contributing: topographical patterns and features that are likely to have been the same or similar at the time of the battle (i.e. the overall relationship between the river channel and floodplain terracing, including the slough and the two large ditches in the pasture/floodplain just south of the river). This is indicated on the 1950 aerial photograph (Fig.19) by the line of trees along the ditches. Specific contributing features include Custer Hill.

Noncontributing: channelization of the river and regrading of the floodplain; agricultural terracing and removal of some hillocks; introduction of the railroad grade in 1929; and a 3-4 foot deep ditch in the far northwest corner of core area which represents the remains of an attempt to divert the river.

Land Use

(See Figures 19,20,32-40)

As described in the historic chronology and historic narrative above, land use within the core area has changed from wintering/hunting area for Plains tribes and the site of the 1868 conflict (Figs. 32,33,34,35), to agricultural use (cattle and wheat, Figs. 19,20,37,38) to a transportation corridor (railroad, Fig. 36), to extended family residential use, and finally to today's preservation, commemoration and recreational uses (Figs. 39, 40).

Contributing: Of existing land uses (preservation, commemoration, recreation), only commemoration relates directly to historic significance, and can be said to be contributing. However, preservation is definitely compatible with maintaining the significance and integrity of the landscape.

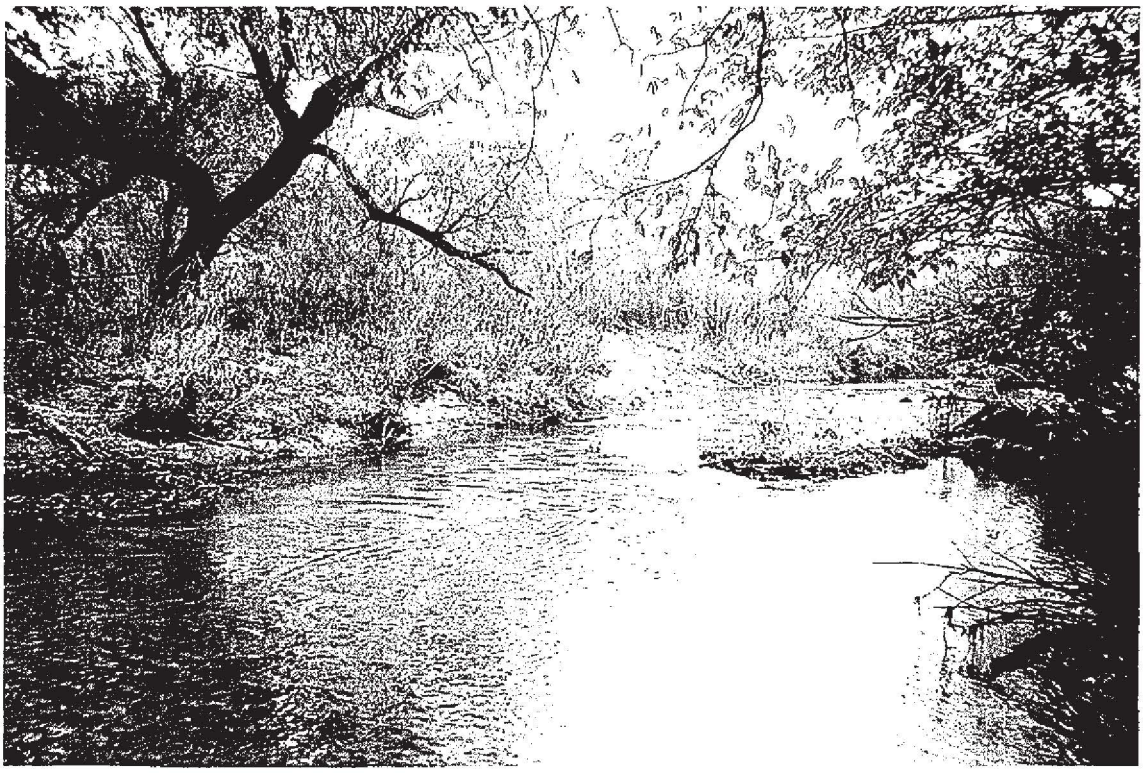
Noncontributing: Land uses that have involved major modification of the landscape uncharacteristic of the historic period, i.e. large-scale agricultural use and use for large-scale mechanized transportation corridor (railroad)

Cultural Traditions

While cultural traditions in the form of land use practices associated with the historic period did not leave lasting physical remains, they are important to understanding the use and meaning of the landscape for the Cheyenne and the U.S. Army. A number of general and specific cultural traditions are important and relevant to the Cheyenne use of the landscape as a winter camp. General traditions include the cultural principles of social and spatial organization used in setting up the camp, warrior and hunting traditions, the meaning and uses of buffalo and various other animals, and the collection of plant materials and use of specific plants for medicinal and ceremonial purposes (Grinnell 1972, pp.166-191). Specific relevant traditions include arranging the camp to face east, locating the camp on the south side of the river for ceremonial reasons, and locating the camp in the area of greatest tree cover (Yellowman, pers. comm.). Warde (1999) describes other cultural traditions. In recent years, ceremonies have been held at the site on the anniversary of the conflict. These ceremonies, because



Washita River (west section) 1997 FIGURE 24



Washita River (middle section) 1990 FIGURE 25



Washita River (east section) 1998 FIGURE 26



Washita River (NE corner) 1998 FIGURE 27

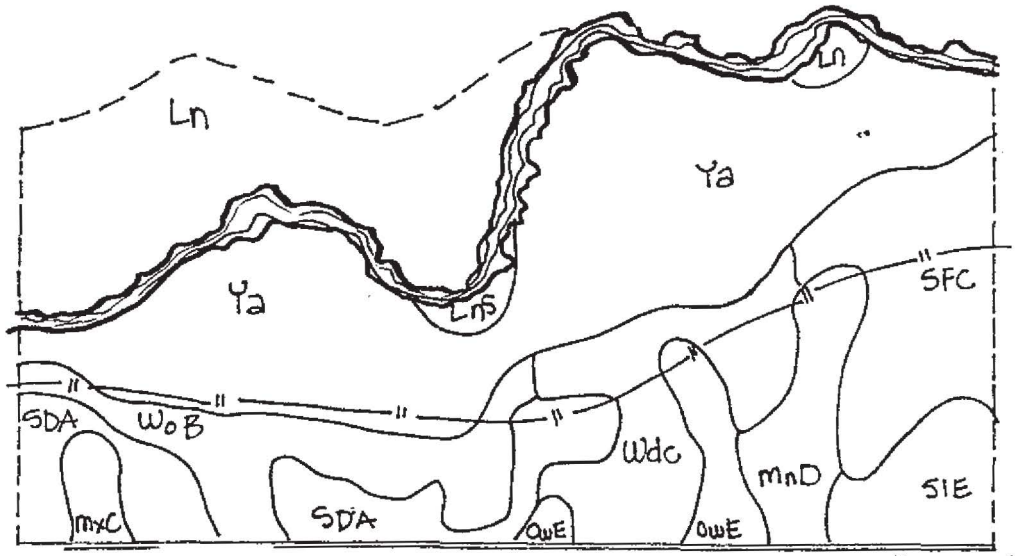


Washita River Floodplain 1997 (looking north) FIGURE 28



Washita River Floodplain 1998 (looking north) FIGURE 29

Map Symbol	Name Soil Taxa	Soil Type	Slope Percent
SpA	Spur and Port	silt loam	0 - 1
WoB	Woodward-Quinlan	fine sandy loam	5 - 8
MxC	Miles-Springer complex	fine sandy loam loamy fine sand, hummocky	3 - 5
WdC	Woodward	fine sandy loam	3 - 5
MnD	Miles--Nobscot complex	fine sandy loam fine sand	5 - 8
SfE	Springer	loamy fine sand	hilly
SfC	Springer	loamy fine sand, hummocky	3 - 5
Ya	Yahola	fine sandy loam	< 1
PfE	Pratt	loamy fine sand	hilly
Ln	Lincoln	sandy, recent alluvium	0



SOIL MAP 1"=1056'

Washita Battlefield National Historic Site north

FIGURE 30

Soil Types

Source: Stotts & DuBay, 1990, p. 9&10

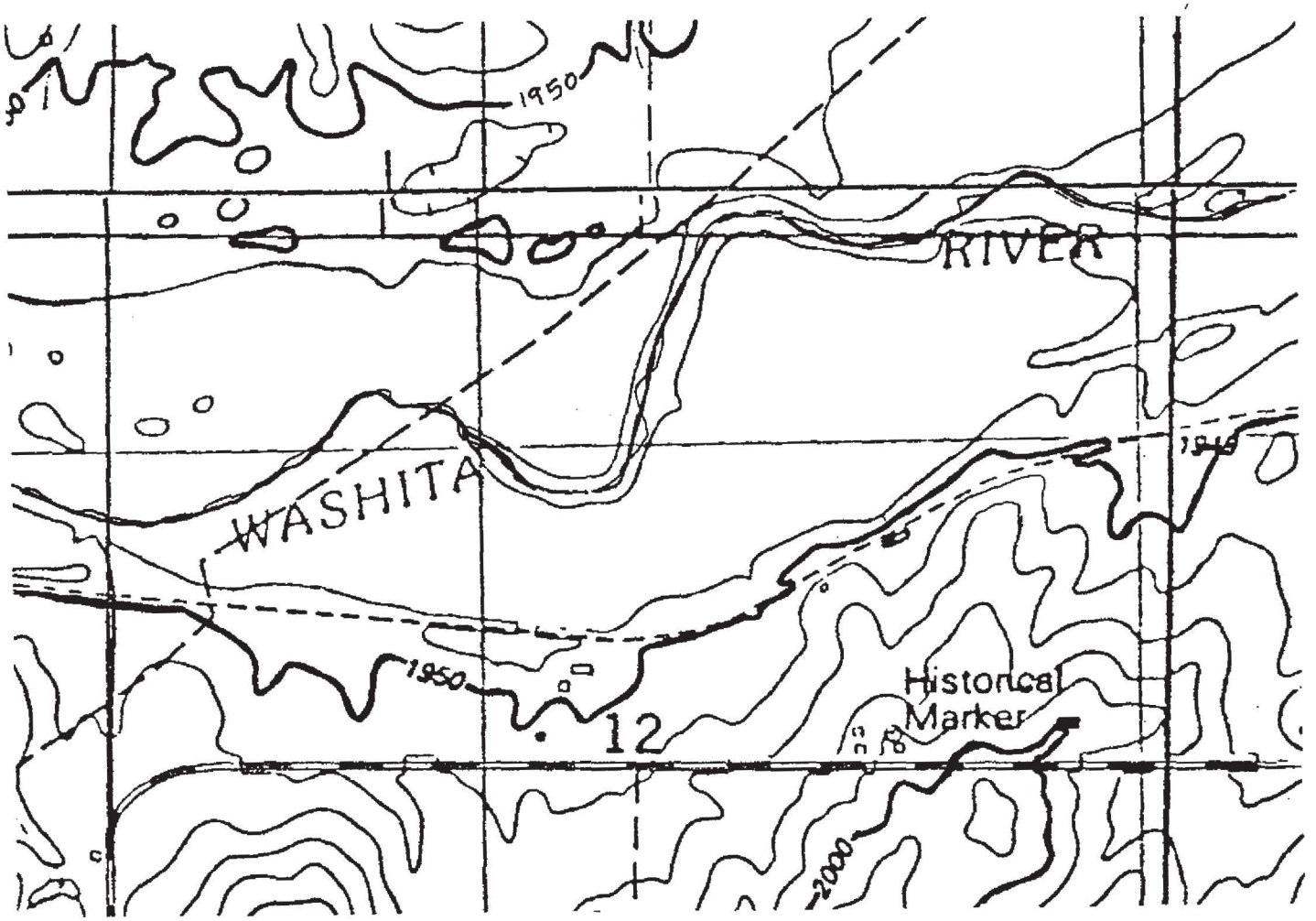


FIGURE 31

Washita NHS. - Topography

Source: USGS Quad, 15', "Cheyenne, Oklahoma", 1960

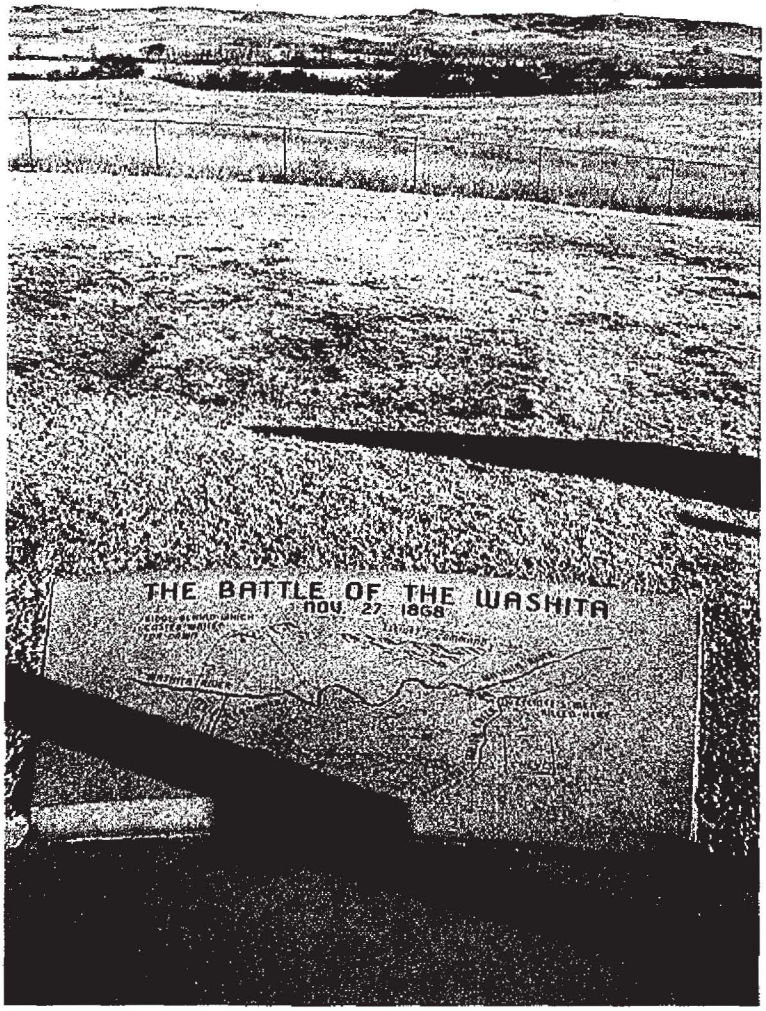


FIGURE 32

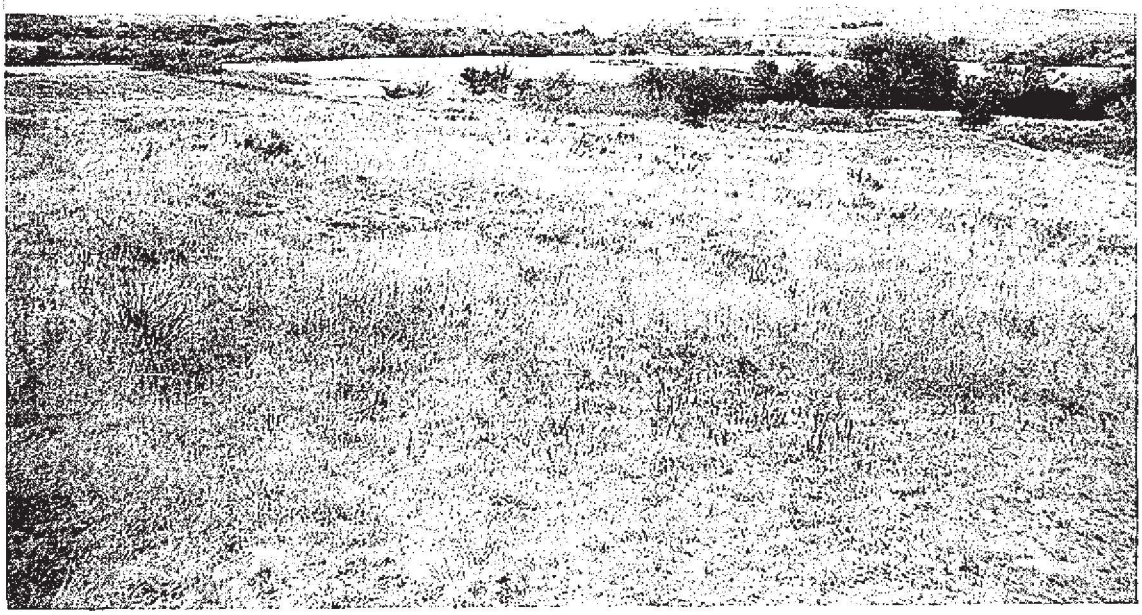
VIEW FROM OVERLOOK - 1998



Floodplain / Pasture, from slough area - 1998 FIGURE 33



Pony Herd Kill Site - 1998 FIGURE 34



Custer Hill area - 1998 FIGURE 35



Railroad Grade (cut section) FIGURE 36

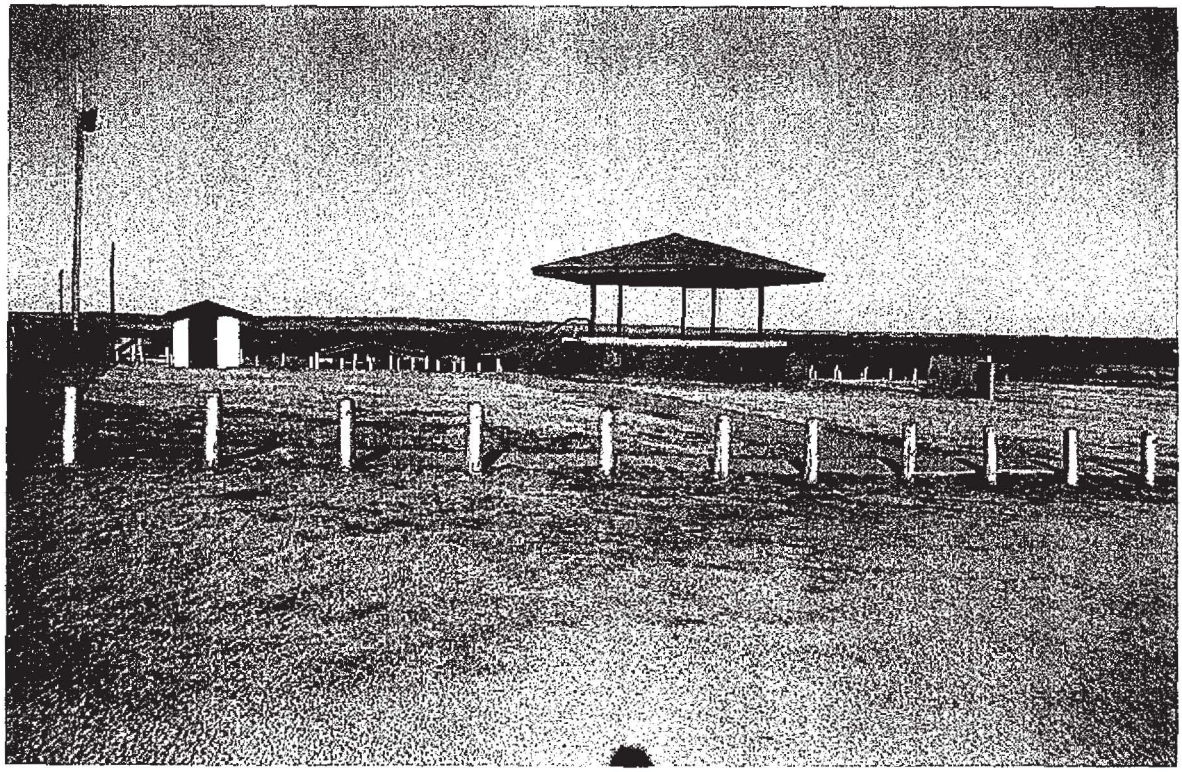
("scale figure" is Ed Nataw)



Wesner Complex - 1997 FIGURE 37



Wesner Complex - garden area - 1997 FIGURE 38



Overlook, looking west - 1997 FIGURE 39



Interpretive Trail by river - 1998 FIGURE 40

of their association with the landscape and its ongoing ethnographic value, are included in cultural traditions.

The military strategy used at Washita by Custer's troops and the ordnance used are also cultural traditions associated with Washita (Lees et. al. 1997). The Washita conflict represented a change in the usual military tactics used in the Indian Wars; i.e. it was a winter surprise attack. Overall tactics also involved surrounding the village before attacking, and approaching the attack as part of a "total war" which required total elimination of the enemy.

Contributing: All cultural traditions mentioned above.
Noncontributing: While cultural traditions associated with agricultural, railroad, and residential uses of the area may be significant to local families or local history of the Cheyenne area, they are noncontributing in the context of the Battle of the Washita.

Views and Vistas

(Figs. 41,42,43)

For Washita, this category addresses views more than vistas, since vistas are consciously designed. While the overall visual relationships are similar now to what they were in 1868 (enclosed views within the riparian corridor, far reaching views from upland locations, and most of the long range views between the floodplain and the upper benches), landscape modifications since the conflict have altered short-range views. A number of specific views were critical to the battle, (e.g. the view of village site from the surrounding area), and specific views are important to the commemoration and interpretation of the landscape today, (e.g. the view of most of the core area from the Overlook). Due to the nature of the core area, views extend into adjacent areas.

See Figs. 41 and 42 for identification of specific contributing views and indication of changes since 1868.

Landscape character types used in Litton's visual analysis of landscape are: enclosed landscape, feature landscape, panoramic landscape, focal landscape, detail landscape, and ephemeral landscape (seasonal or changeable visual qualities) (Litton 1974). Generally, the views along the river and within the riparian area would have been enclosed during the historic period -- more so in summer than in winter due to tree canopy -- and are somewhat less enclosed today due to the decrease in extent of tree growth. Generally, views from the upland areas would have been, and still are, panoramic. During the conflict, (Fig. 13) Chief Black Kettle's Village would have been the focal point on the landscape for Custer and his troops, and for the Cheyenne, directions from which the troops were approaching and escape route options would have been focal points. Ephemeral qualities include seasonal color changes (see Vegetation and Landscape Qualities sections below) and seasonal climatic changes. Oral History and other ethnographic studies may identify other important views and visual focal points. Figure 43 illustrates landscape character areas.

Circulation

Contributing circulation patterns include: those likely to have been present during the historic period, such as traditional use trails, animal trails or corridors, European hunter/trapper trails, and river crossings; and routes specifically associated with the conflict, for example, observation nodes, lines of advance/retreat, and reinforcement routes used by the other Plains tribes coming from the east. As a winter Cheyenne encampment, the major circulation route may have been along the river, with trails into the uplands, possibly along the smaller drainages -- used by both people and animals. The account of the battle by Moving Behind (1955) mentions an old road crossing at a sharp curve in the river and remains of old roads, then in the form of steep paths (not identified on-site to date). During the conflict, the routes used by the U.S. troops to encircle and advance upon the village and the routes used by the Cheyenne to attempt escape (Fig. 13) are contributing even though no specific visible features remain. The more visible post-1868 circulation patterns and features (the railroad grade, the adjacent county road, farm roads/lanes, cattle trails, and river crossings) are, however, noncontributing.

Vegetation (Figures 44 - 58)

Note: Vegetation management and interpretation also needs to consider significant ethnographic associations and uses of plant materials. Refer to ethnographic studies; potentially culturally sensitive information is not detailed here.

The Washita core area is located in the transitional zone between the short and tall grass prairies, and thus contains plants characteristic of both zones. Generally, vegetation has evolved from 1) that characteristic of a natural prairie ecosystem (grasses, forbs, legumes, and some shrubs and trees) to 2) that of a mixed prairie, agricultural, and residential environment. This second vegetation type consists of a mixture of naturally-occurring prairie species, introduced agricultural plants (e.g. wheat and pasture grasses like Plains/Old World Bluestem), and introduced ornamental plants (especially around the location of the previous Wesner residence complex).

Figure 12 shows the extent of floodplain vegetation likely to have been present in the area in 1868. Figures 44a and 44b are two series of cross sections that show, diagrammatically, likely seasonal changes characteristic of the historic period and existing conditions, respectively. Figure 45 shows vegetation as recorded during the May 1997 field visit, and Figure 46 shows vegetation polygons, or character areas, from the 8/98 vegetation survey (Stotts & DuBey 1998). Numbered areas and features in Figures 45 and 46 are discussed below.

An 1890 photograph (Fig. 17) shows a specific tree close to the riparian area that is identified as the Black Kettle tree. This tree had a blaze inscribed into the trunk by members of the Cheyenne community. Photographs from the 1930s indicate that the stump only remained. If remains of this tree or its location are found in the future, they need to be identified as the remains of a significant individual tree, the only specimen tree so far identified at Washita. Other potential specimen trees are those that also have blazes on their trunks, some of which

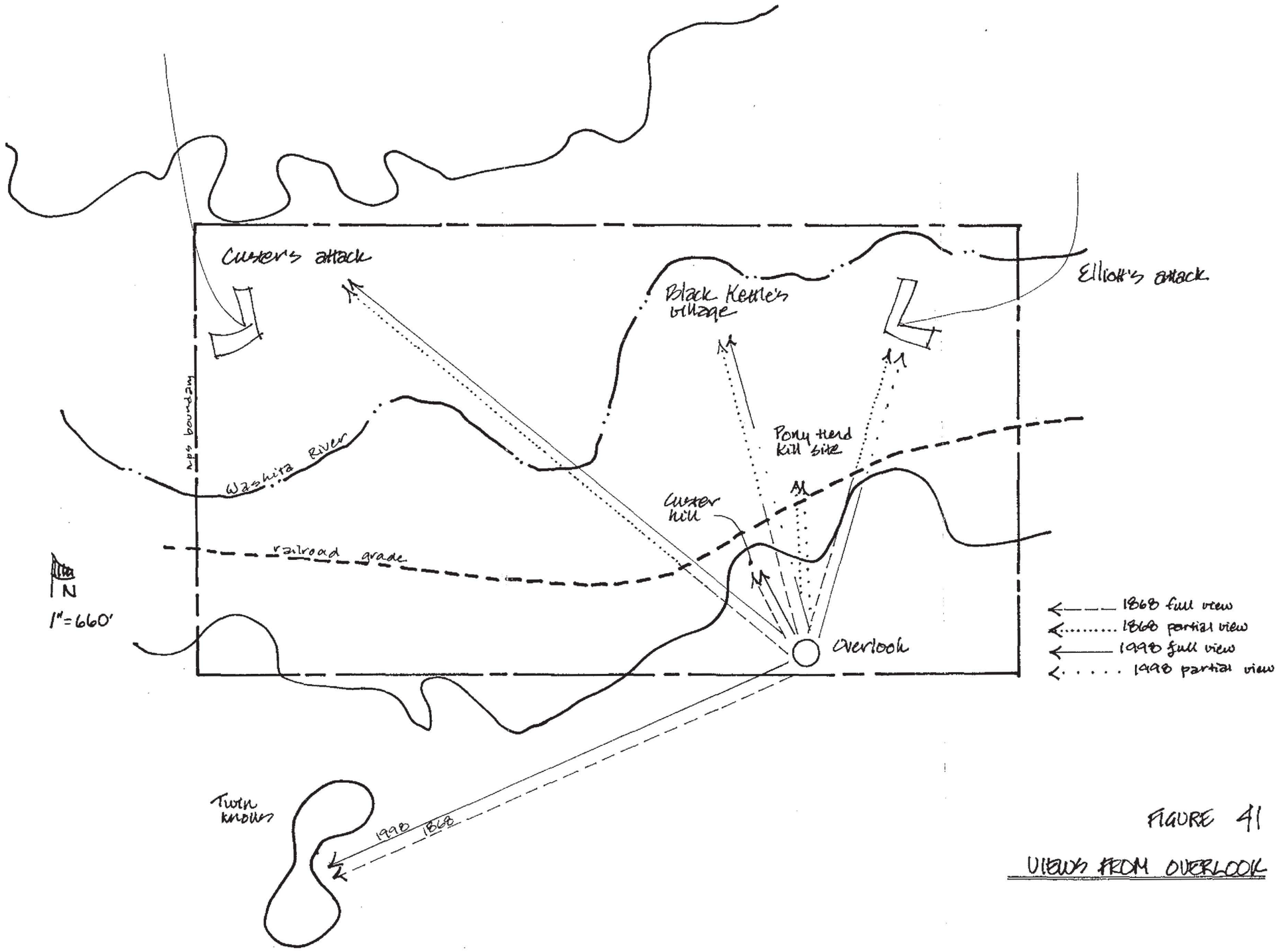


FIGURE 41

VIEWS FROM OVERLOOK

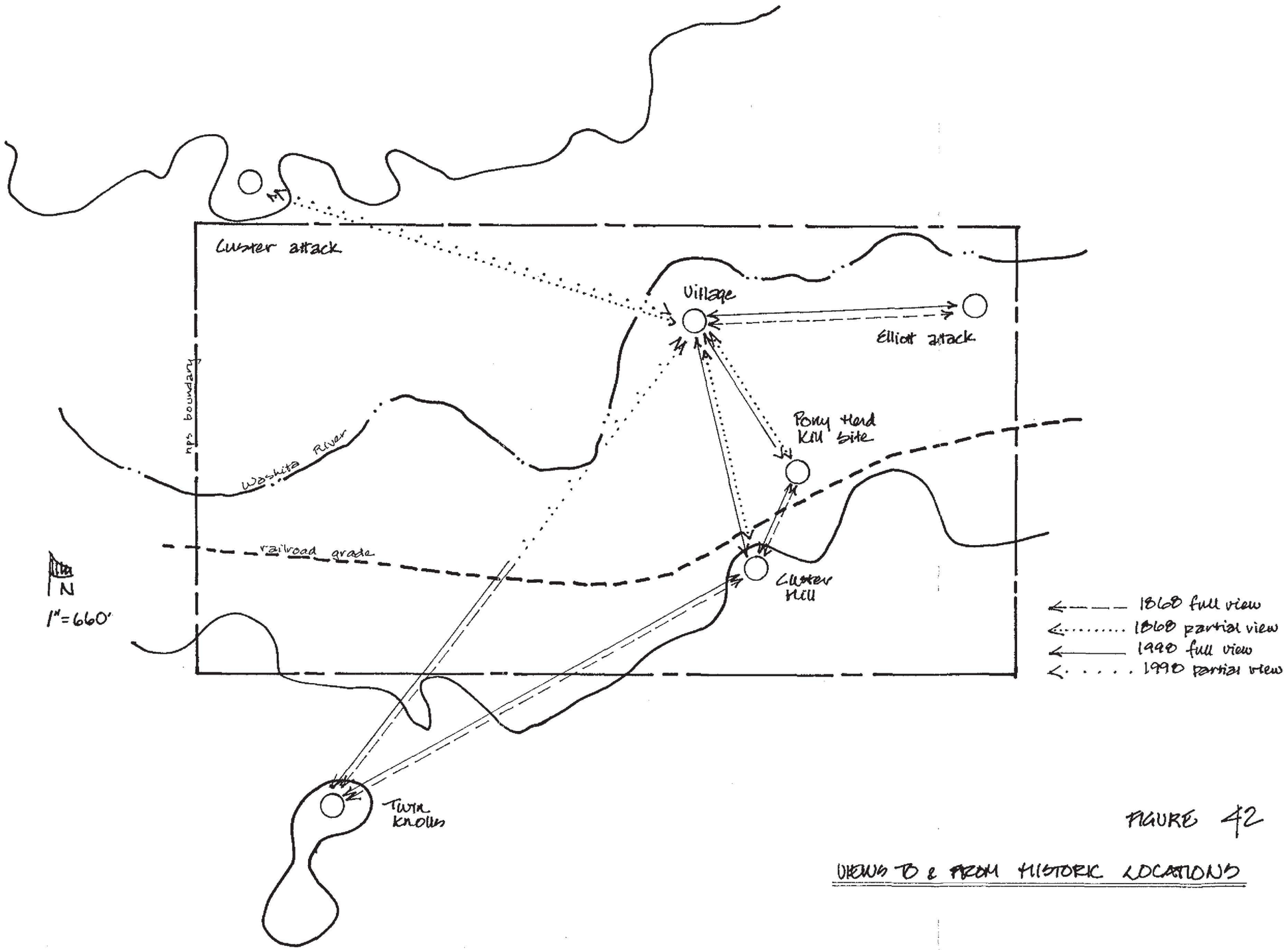


FIGURE 42

VIEWS TO & FROM HISTORIC LOCATIONS

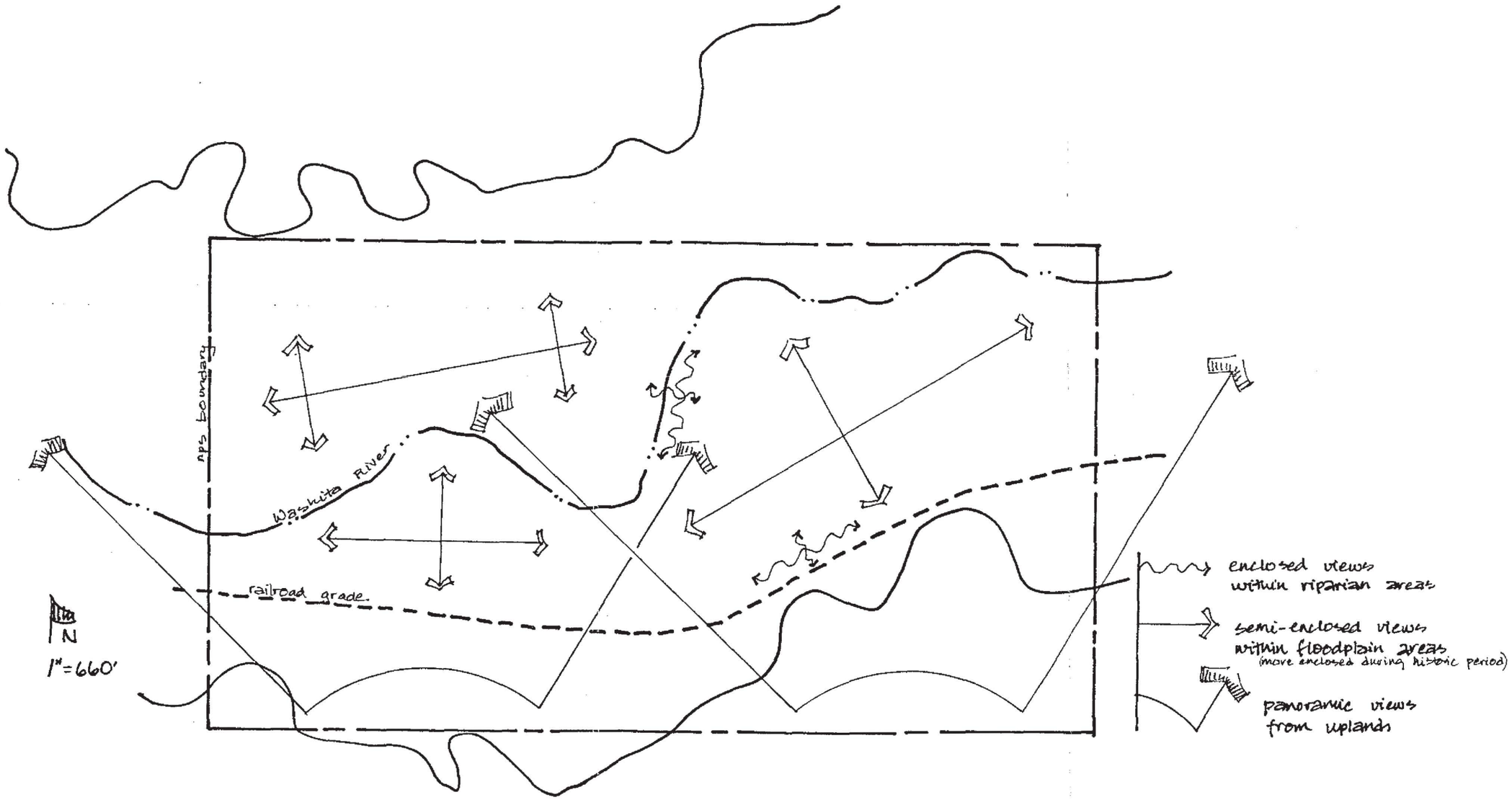


FIGURE 43

VISUAL CHARACTER AREAS (1990)

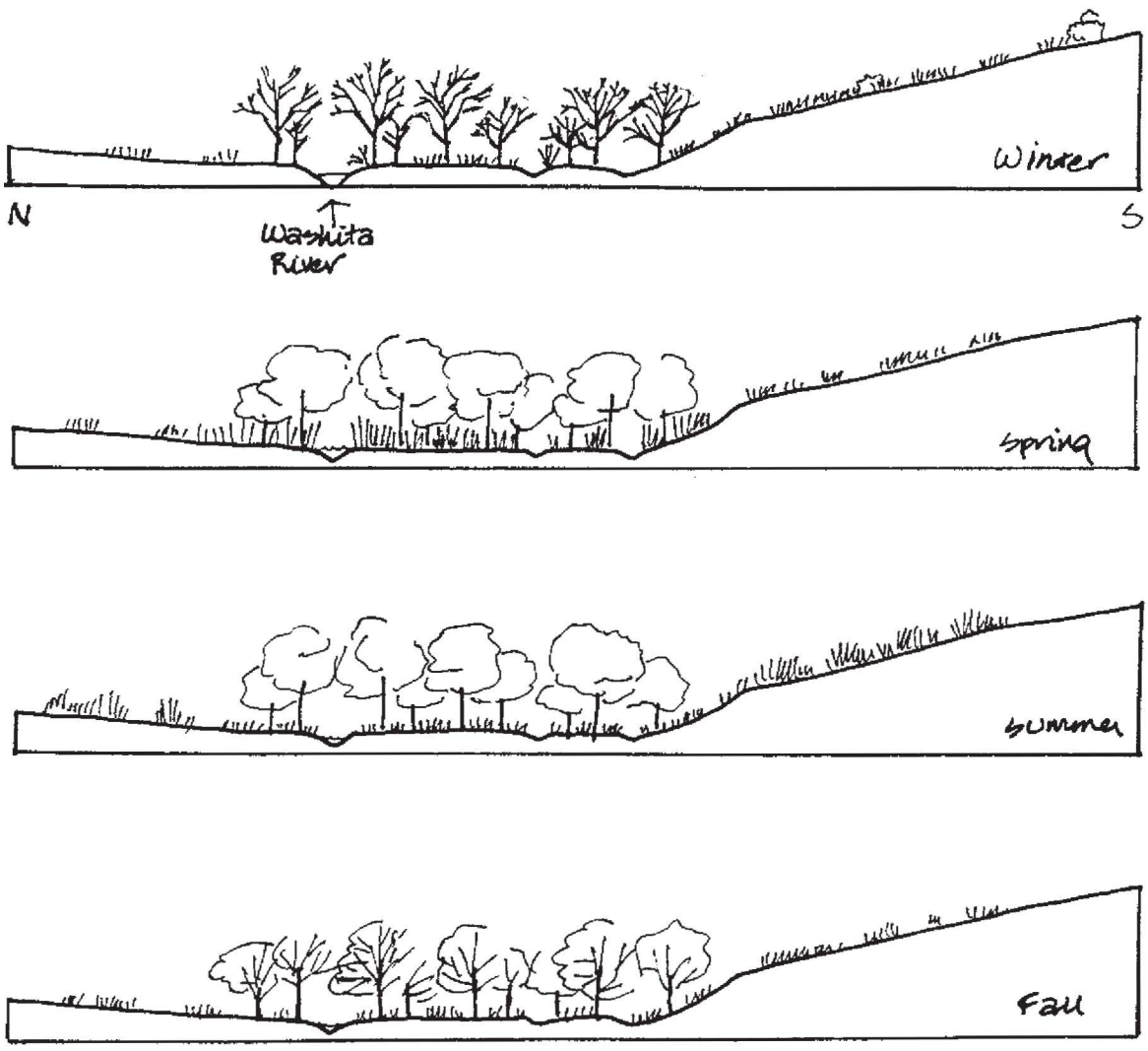


FIGURE 44a

VEGETATION: SEASONAL CHANGES (historic)

Source: West 1995
See Fig 21 for section location

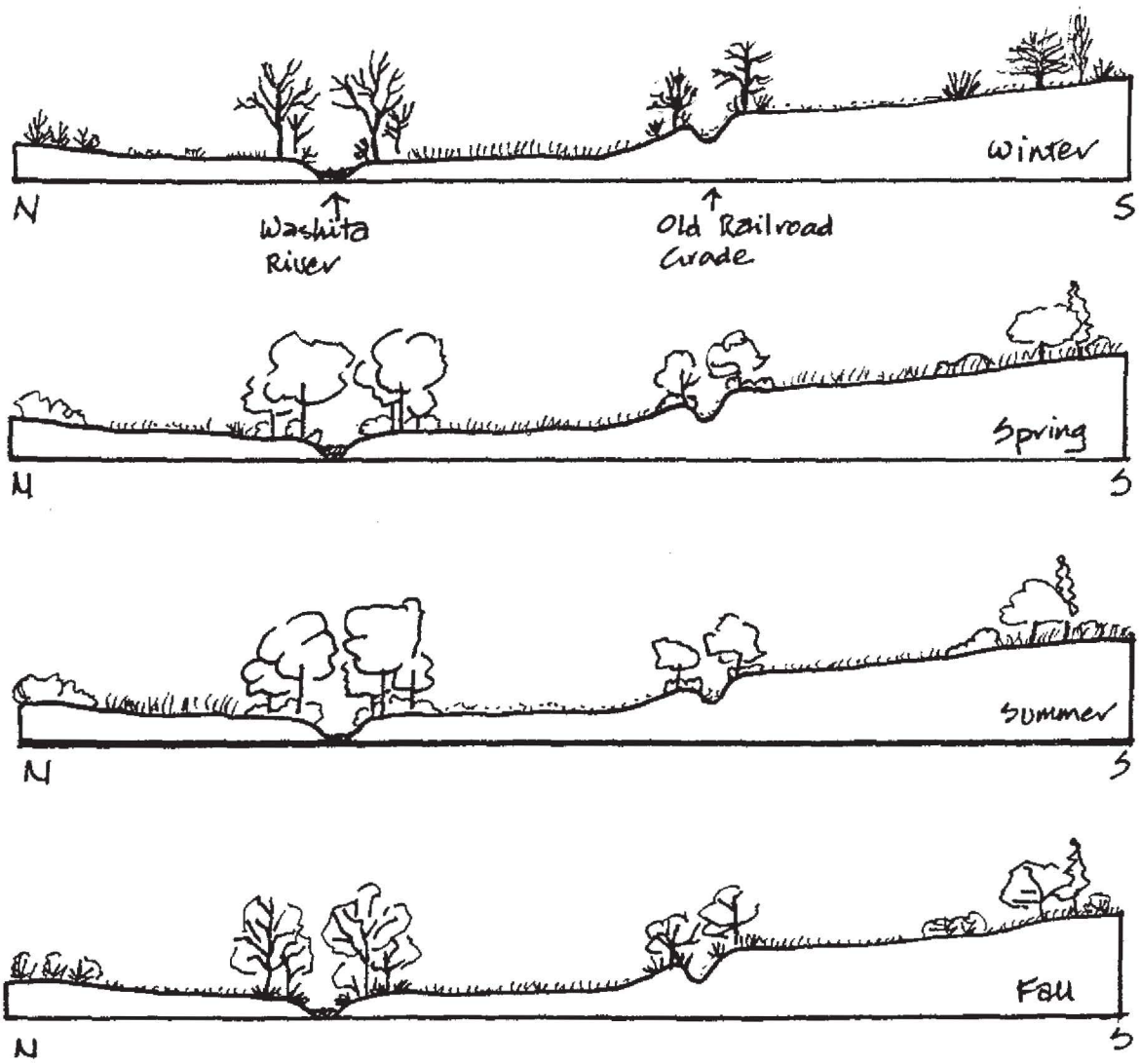


FIGURE 44b

VEGETATION: SEASONAL CHANGES (1998)

Source: Stotts & Dubey, 1998
See Fig. 46 for section location

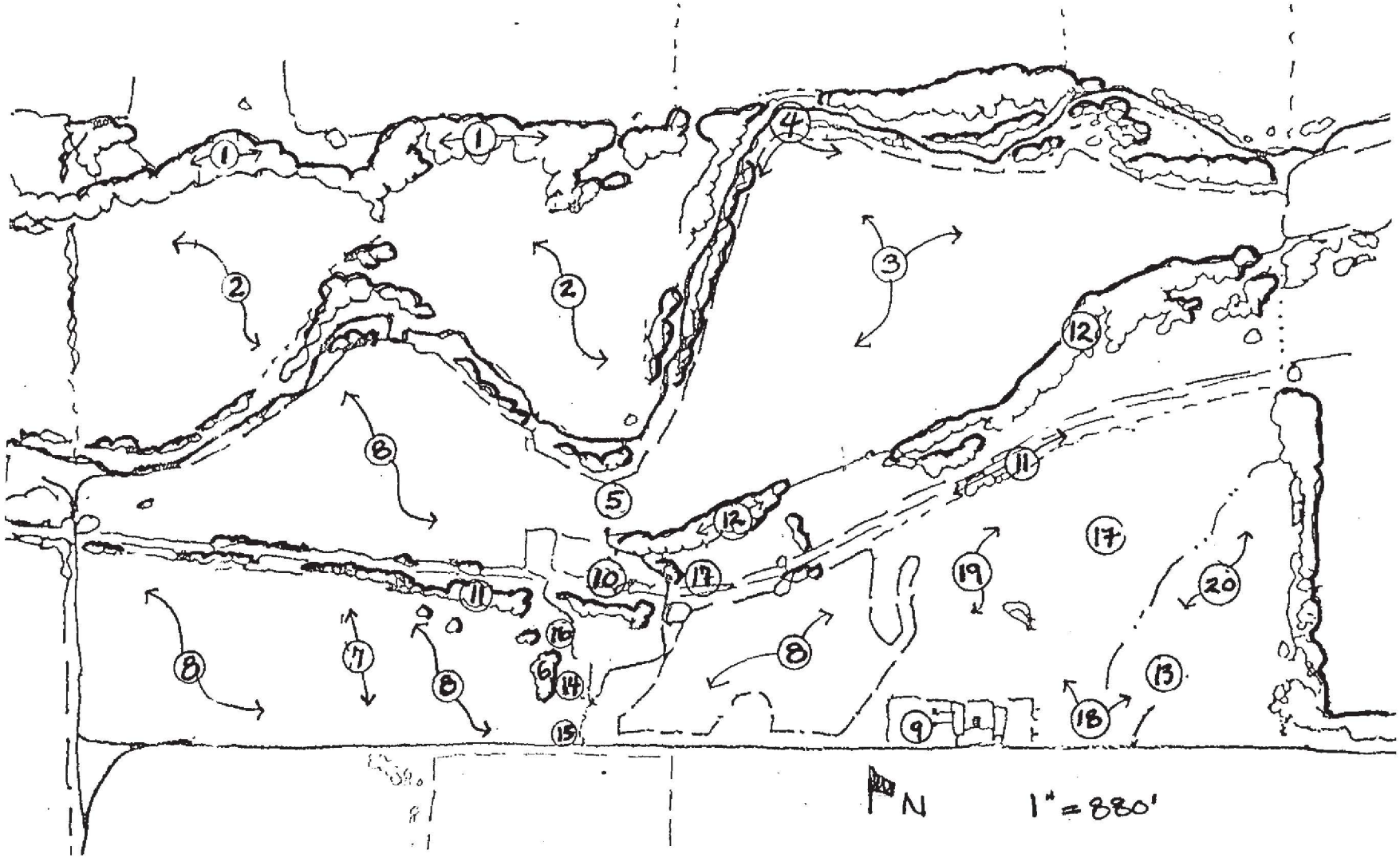
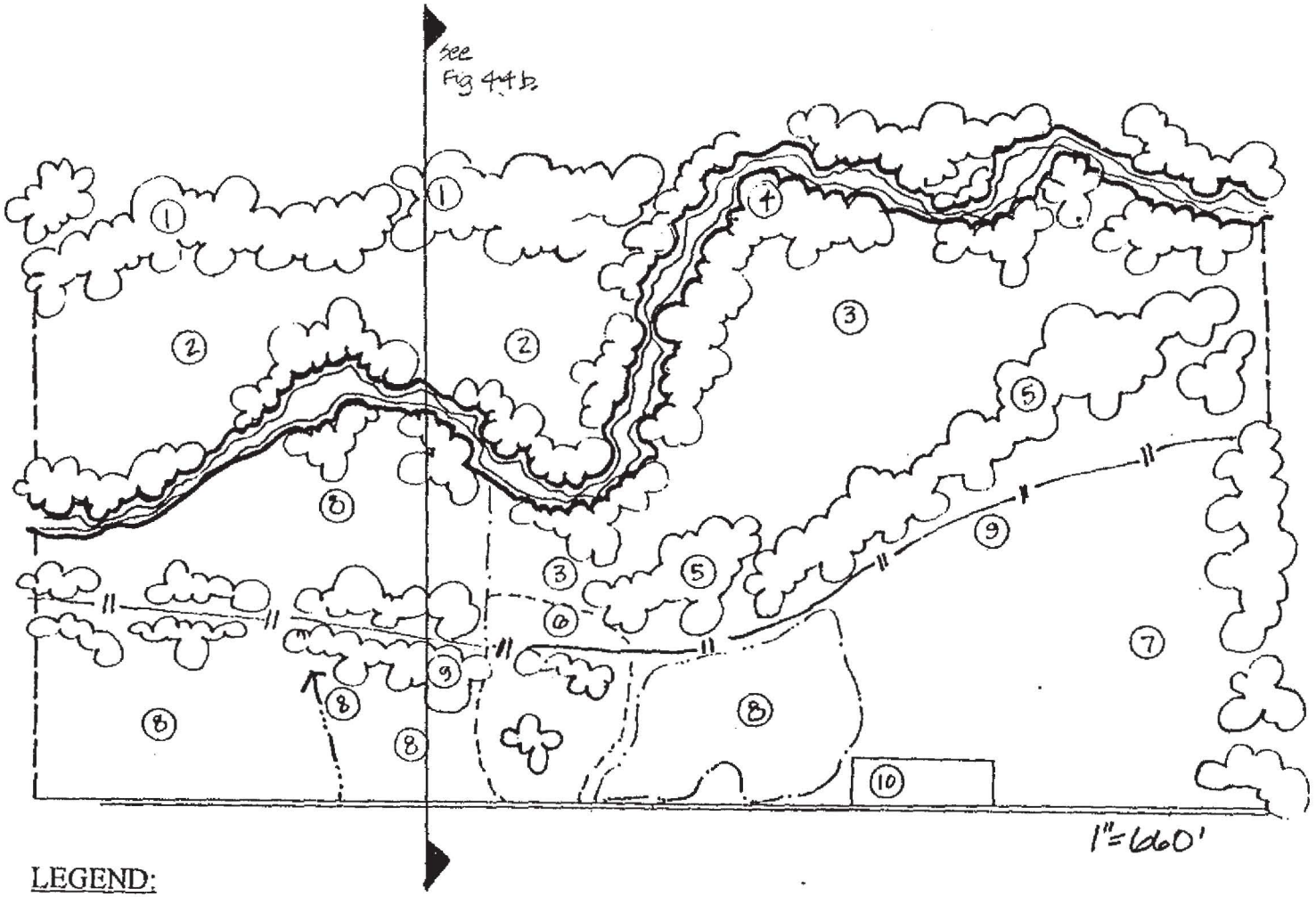


FIGURE 45

VEGETATION: 1997 SITE VISIT



1 North Bench
2 North Flood Plain
3 Meadow
4 River Riparian
5 South Riparian
6 Farmstead
7 Upland Range
8 Wheat Fields
9 Rail Road Track
10 Park Overlook

LEGEND:

Railroad —— // —— // ——
NPS Property Line ————————
Slough —— ··· —— ·· →
Cultivation Line —— · —— · ——
Farmstead Boundary - - - - - - - -
Overlook
Canopy Vegetation

FINAL VEGETATION POLYGONS 1998

Washita Battlefield National Historic Site

north

FIGURE 46

Source: Stotts & Dubey 1998

have been identified on surveys but not located in this present inventory (e.g. Burton 1969 map 1-C)

ESTIMATED VEGETATION PRESENT DURING HISTORIC PERIOD (late 1860s -- early 1870s)

The estimation of vegetation present during the historic period outlined below is based on: 1) historic accounts (oral histories of conflict survivors and Anglo-American exploration/survey accounts); 2) contemporary oral histories; 3) estimations of likely conditions from staff of the Black Kettle National Grasslands; 4) historic photographs; and 5) analysis of general vegetation patterns in the larger Plains region (primarily from West 1995).

Historic documentation and oral history information of historic period conditions/vegetation:

1873 Hackbusch survey along Washita River (Hackbusch 1873) -- Hackbusch mentions cottonwood, elm, hackberry, coffee bean, black oak, and walnut trees being present, as well as buffalo grass, blue joint grass, and sand crab.

1853 Whipple survey along Washita River (Whipple 1855) -- Whipple recorded red oak, post oak (*Quercus obtusiloba*), black jack, cottonwood (also known as Alamo, *Populus milofera*), and elm trees as present along the river, as well as buffalo grass, rich grama grass, and other prairie grasses. He also notes that live oak trees were present nearby.

1930 interview with Chief Magpie -- Chief Magpie is quoted as providing the following description: "Black Kettle's village stood on the south side of the big bend in the creek. There were sandhills and scattered timber north of the stream. There was a fringe of larger trees along the creek which gave partial shelter from the cold north winds. There was snow on the ground, but in the village the snow had been beaten down by many feet. Our pony herds grazed in the valley and up on the sides of the hills to the south when snow did not hide the grass. Some few horses, however, were kept always in the village for emergencies or to be ridden after the herds. That night some of them were across the creek in the sand hills. . . .(during the conflict) . . .We turned to the south, finally dropping into a slight depression in which was growing a small thicket of young chinaberry bushes and tall grass".

1937 interview with Moving Behind (Mrs. Black Hawk), published in 1955 -- Moving Behind is quoted as saying: "As we ran, we could see the red fire of the shots. We got near a hill, and there we saw a steep path, where an old road used to be. There was red grass along the path, and although the ponies had eaten some of it, it was still high enough for us to hide . . .The Indian ponies that were left were driven toward the bottoms . ."

1999 interview with Moses Starr Jnr. – During his interview with Mary Jane Warde (Warde 1999), Mr. Starr mentioned that there used to be many more trees growing in the area that is now the Washita NHS core area. He mentioned that it is not likely that Black Kettle's village would have camped directly underneath cottonwood trees, due to their association with lightning. While cottonwood trees are culturally important, and good sources of shade, it is

more likely that the village would have camped under oak or elm trees. Currants, wild grapes and plum bushes were specifically mentioned by Mr. Starr as good for gathering and eating, and as likely to have been growing within the Washita core area during the historic period.

General vegetation patterns

While Elliott West's (1995) description of the patterns of interrelationship between river valley ecology (vegetation in particular), bison habitat, and Plains Indian and Anglo-American use of river valley areas addresses the Central Plains north of Washita, overall patterns apply also to the Washita River valley. Because the Washita River valley is somewhat more arid than the central or northern plains focused on by West, the patterns he describes (general degradation of the natural environment) would have been even more present in the Washita River valley area (West, pers. comm.).

According to West, during the mid nineteenth century, river valleys on the Plains were the focal point for Plains Indians' winter activity (winter camps, following the bison who followed the grasses), and for Anglo-American's summer activity (east-west travel, sometimes in massive wagon trains) (West, 1995, p. 26).

Vegetation patterns along river valleys varied seasonally (Fig. 44). Likely vegetation included short grasses such as buffalo grass, and mid-tall grasses, such as little and big bluestem. The mid-tall grasses sprouted earlier, down in the floodplain area, providing sheltered forage in early spring. As spring progressed into early summer, the shorter grasses took over in the floodplain areas and also started growing in the upland areas. Forage gradually declined as winter approached. (West 1995, p. 21-22).

In the late 1850s and approaching the time of the Battle of the Washita, the resources within the river valleys were depleted by a number of factors, including the impact of increased cross-plain traffic due to the western gold rushes, the long period of drought between the late 1840s and around 1862, and general overgrazing. The net result of overgrazing (by bison and horses) was the reduction in mid-tall grasses and thus the reduction in early spring feed. What was abundant (bison, grassland, space) was not nearly as important as what was scarce (water, riparian habitat, shelter, winter forage) (West 1995, p. 49). This pattern emphasizes the importance of river valley areas for winter refuges. Following these patterns, Plains Indian communities would winter in the river valleys in smaller groups, then gather sometimes in large numbers for the summer bison hunts, returning to the river valleys in the fall (West 1995, p. 21-22).

Riparian zone:
Typical trees in this zone would have been cottonwood, elm, and willow (NPS 1970, p. 16). Cedar trees were also abundant in canyons along the Washita and South Canadian Rivers (Rae 1999, pers. comm.) The tree stands would have extended the width of the floodplain, for example, roughly 1/4 mile to the south of the river at the location of Chief Black Kettle's village. In 1868, with the free-flowing river and less disturbed floodplain, the entire floodplain area would have provided good conditions for the establishment of cottonwood trees, which depend

on a certain amount of water and some ground disturbance. Conditions in the floodplain (e.g. extent of cottonwood growth) would have fluctuated year to year, with substantially different conditions possible within any five year period (Blackwell, pers. comm. 1998). The Washita River is known to the Cheyenne as the Lodge Pole River, so named because the cottonwood trees were used to make lodge poles (Hart, pers. comm.). Cedar trees were likely also used for lodge poles (Rae, 1999, pers. comm.) Oral history accounts from the 1930s (Interview with Louis Williams, born 1878) indicate that thickets of wild plums, wild grapes, wild dewberries, red and black haws, and black walnuts, hickory nuts, and pecans would all have been present along the Washita River. Hackbusch, in his 1873 survey notes, indicated that coffee bean and black oak trees were also present along the river (Hackbusch 1873). Hackbusch lists the grasses present as buffalo, blue joint and sand crab. (Note: In future research, as with other historic sources, common names used historically need to be checked with common names used today to see if historic sources are referring to the same plant). Sandplum and sage may also have been present (Allen, pers. comm. 1997).

Upper Floodplain:
Lower upland zone: A mixture of various grasses, forbs (e.g. Western Ragweed, Heath Aster, Spiderwort, Pitcher Sage), sedges, and legumes (e.g. Indigo Clover, Partridge Pea) (Allen, pers. comm. 1997) would have been present in this zone. Woody plants like sandplum and sage may also have been present, and trees would have been located in drainages only, and then would probably have been elms or hackberries rather than cottonwoods (Brown 1964).

Uplands zone:
Grasses would have been the major vegetation in this zone (e.g. sand bluestem, little bluestem, switchgrass, indiangrass, Canada wildrye and tall dropseed) (U.S.D.A., N.R.C.S. 1968). Some small trees or shrubs may have been present in the drainages. Also, in a less-disturbed system, species mix and height mix would vary with patterns of drought and fire (Blackwell, pers. comm. 1997).

PERIOD OF EARLY ANGLO-AMERICAN SETTLEMENT (1890s - 1920s)

The Land Runs of the late 1800s were watershed events that encouraged Anglo-American settlement in the Washita area. Agricultural activity generally increased during the turn of the century and on into the 1920s. In 1928-29, the Panhandle and Santa Fe Railroad line was constructed through the core area. During the 1920s wheat boom, winter wheat was introduced into the area as a cultivated crop. With the introduction of cattle grazing, the following plants may have started to move into the area during this period (US.D.A, N.R.C.S 1968):

In the floodplain zone:
Grasses: Meadow dropseed, tall dropseed, western wheatgrass, vine mesquite, blue grama, sideoats grama, buffalo grass, and Scribner's panicum, and annuals (rescuegrass, japanese brome) and perennials (silver bluestem, sand dropseed, red threeawn, tumble windmillgrass, and gummy lovegrass).
Legumes: deervetch

Forbs: Prairie sagewort, and annuals (wax goldenweed, common sunflower, basketflower, giant ragweed), and perennials (Baldwin ironweed, western ragweed)
Woody plants: indigobush amorpha, western dogwood

In the uplands zone:
Grasses: sideoats grama, blue grama, buffalograss, western wheatgrass, vine-mesquite, same annuals as floodplain zone, all annuals, and same perennials except not so much red threeawn or gummy lovegrass, and potentially more perennial threeawn and tumblegrass.
Legumes: wild alfalfa, wildindigo, prairie clover, and trailing wildbean.
Forbs: Prairie sagewort, dotted gayfeather, prairie coneflower, green antelopehorn, all annuals, and perennials e.g. Baldwin ironweed, silverleaf nightshade, pricklypear, Carolina horsenettle, curlycap gumweed, western yarrow and western ragweed.
Woody plants: mesquite, sumac, and skunkbush.

DUSTBOWL ERA (late 1920s, 1930s)

Farming practices of the time, in addition to drought conditions, led to crop failure and subsequent loss of topsoil, and thus to the hardships of many farmers and the migrations west. In response to the declining growing conditions, grass reseeding was completed and linear shelterbelt tree plantings were established, using non-native trees, e.g. Eastern Red Cedar (Allen, pers. comm., 1997), and in some cases deciduous trees like pecan. Salt cedar may have been introduced during this period, or in a later period; this plant now grows in abundance along the river. Trees and shrubs (mostly elm) were planted along the railroad grade on either side of the tracks (mostly on the north side), to provide a shelterbelt. The species listed above -- those which potentially moved into the area with the introduction of in cattle grazing -- likely continued to move into the area during this period.

MID-LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY AGRICULTURAL USE PERIOD (1940s -- 1997)

During this period, wheat continued to be a primary crop, along with milo. Most of the uplands area in the region were ploughed by the 1930s and reseeded (Fig. 19). A wheat silo was constructed along the bench south of the slough by John Wesner some time after 1945 when he acquired the property, and was removed at a later date, prior to 1971. In the 1970s and potentially earlier, various non-native species were introduced as pasture grasses (e.g. bermuda, Old World / Plains Bluestem). These non-native species were used extensively in the floodplain and lower upland areas for the cattle (e.g. 56.7 acres of Plains Bluestem was present in the floodplain south of the river in 1997).

From discussions with Betty and Brian Wesner, some information on land use and vegetation since 1971, when Dale and Betty Wesner took over the property, is available. Section 2 (Figs. 45 and 46) was cleared for pasture in the 1970s; prior to this clearing, cottonwoods and tamarisk were present in this area, including some large trees. After clearing, the area was planted in hay grazer, then wheat, then bermuda. Section 3 (Figs. 45 and 46) was, through the 1970s, divided into three sections, planted in bermuda, then wheat, then Plains Bluestem. An aerial photograph from the 1950s (Fig 19) show rows of cottonwoods growing along the

drainages which subdivided this area. Plains, or Old World Bluestem (*Bothriochloa ischaemum*) is a hardy exotic species which makes an effective but difficult to remove pasture grass. The drainage which divides the far southwestern area, identified as #7 on the 1997 map, is a natural drainage along which a grove of trees flourished until the 1920s; now, it is a mix of bermuda and various shrubs. The area identified as the north part of section 8 (north of the railroad grade) on the 1997 and 1998 maps was planted in alfalfa prior to 1971. Section 7 on the 1998 map has not been disturbed by plowing or terracing since 1970. The southeast corner of this area, identified as #20 on the 1997 map, was used to grow wheat in the early to mid 1960s, and an earlier variety of Plains Bluestem was planted here in 1971-2. Introduced ornamental plants were established around the residential complexes, for example, Lombardy poplar, fruitless mulberry, and various ornamental shrubs.

EXISTING CONDITIONS (1998)
(See Figs. 44b, 47, & 48)

The description of existing vegetation patterns and species below is based on the vegetation character areas, or polygons, used in the Vegetation Analysis by Stotts and DuBey (1998) (Fig. 46); the numbers associated with the areas listed below correspond to the polygon area numbers used in Stotts & DuBey. See Stotts & DuBey for more detail on all plants identified along transects, percentage of cover of different species, and scientific names of plants. Additional notes are incorporated from the vegetation analysis work completed for this CLI in 1997. The 1997 information is from interviews with Betty Wesner (property owner) and Reggie Blackwell (District Ranger, Black Kettle National Grasslands), and from on-site inspection with Reggie Blackwell.

(See also photographs in Stotts & DuBey 1998)

1 - North Bench (Fig. 47)
This 37.8 acres area of bench land is slightly rolling, with a southern aspect. This area supports Chickasaw plum, American wild olive thickets, button bush, hackberry, soapberry, American elm, and Kentucky coffee bean trees. Dominant grass species are little bluestem, grama, and switch grass. This area is an ecotone (transitional area) between the Washita River floodplain and the prairie uplands. Because this ecotone has been established for a long period, there is a high level of biodiversity among the vegetation, e.g. sand sage, yucca and cactus grow within the shade of the Kentucky coffee bean and hackberry trees.

2 - North Floodplain (Fig. 47)
This 45.5-acre area is nearly flat, with evidence of old river channels. The riparian belt, approximately 30 feet wide, follows the river channel, and on the north side of the river, tree species present include black willow, Eastern Cottonwood, hackberry and tamarisk. Dominant plants within the cleared area in this section (#2) include yellow sweet clover, bermuda, downy brome grass, bundle flower, and camphor weed. Yellow sweet clover and bundle flower are nitrogen fixers. The plum and black willow thickets seem to be on the increase, with the plum thickets extending into the North Floodplain area from the riparian zone, and the black willow developing in low areas.

3 - Meadow (pasture) (Fig. 48)
Prior to May 1999, this area was occupied primarily by well-established Plains Bluestem, which provided a dense cover resistant to the encroachment of weed species and which reduced wind erosion. Other plants present in low alkaline spots included pale dock, bermuda grass, sunflower, and ragweed. In 1999, since completion of the vegetation maps (Figs. 47 and 48), this 56-acre area has been burned, and will be re-seeded with annual wheat for two years, then with native grass in the third year.

4 - Washita River Riparian (Fig. 49)
The average width of the riparian zone today is 242 feet, and the average width of the river, bank to bank, is 21.5 feet. On the south side, the dominant tree species is tamarisk, and the American elm provides the greatest amount of canopy cover. Together, the tamarisk and elm form a thick canopy in selected places along the south side of the river. On the north side, more cottonwood and black willow are prevalent. Within this zone, horse weed and hedge nettle are the dominant broad leaf plants, and the dominant grasses are plains bluestem, Bermuda grass and downy brome. Riverbank height ranges from almost zero to seven feet. Less vegetated banks tend to be less steep and therefore more stable than the steeper and more densely vegetated banks.

5 - South Riparian (Fig. 50)
This area, believed to be an old river channel, is now known as the slough, and lies between the meadow/pasture to the north and the bench to the south. Tree species include Eastern cottonwoods (up to 70 feet tall) and black willow (up to 50 feet tall). This area has a higher plant diversity than the River Riparian, with 16 tree and shrub species present. This area also includes the bench land north of the railroad grade, where the grass is about 20 percent more dense than that growing 60 feet south of the railroad grade. As mentioned above, along the north side of the railroad grade are a number of elm trees remaining from the effort to established a shelter belt on this side. Other plants present in this area today are red mulberry, Jimson weed, Midwest indigo, pokeweed, sunflower, wire grass, iron weed, flame-leaf sumac, and American wild olive.

6 - Farmstead (Figs. 51-54)
This 6-acre area is the location of the previous Wesner residence, farming outbuildings, and garden area –# 14, 15, 6, 16, and 10 on the 1997 map (Fig. 45). Area #6 is the location of a cluster of soapberry trees growing along the swale. Hackberry trees are also present in this general zone. In areas #14 and 15, various ornamental plants such as a mulberry tree, and mowed bermuda and buffalo grass are present. Tall abundant exotic weed species have taken over the bare ground left when livestock and buildings were removed from the park in 1997. These include kochia, bermuda grass, downy brome, giant ragweed, curlycup gum weed, and sunflower. Area #13 on the 1997 map, the site of the Brian Wesner house which was removed in 1997, is the location of a number of trees, including a lombardy poplar.



FIGURE 47

VEGETATION: NORTH BENCH & FLOODPLAIN
(1998)

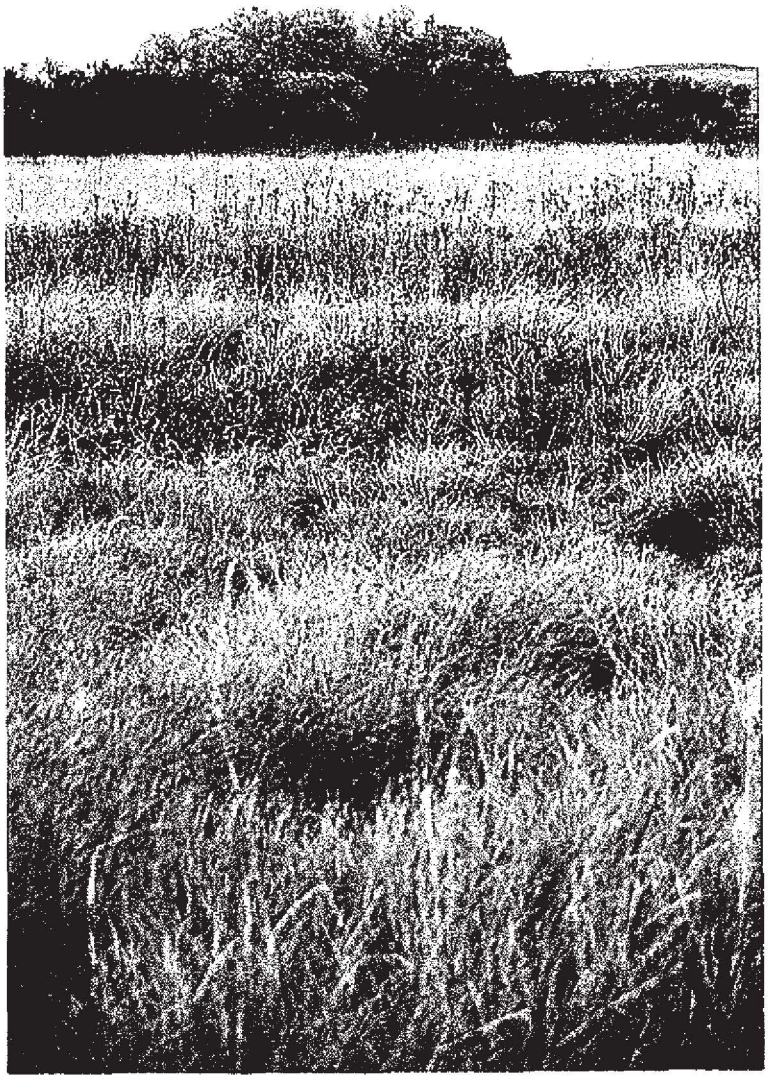


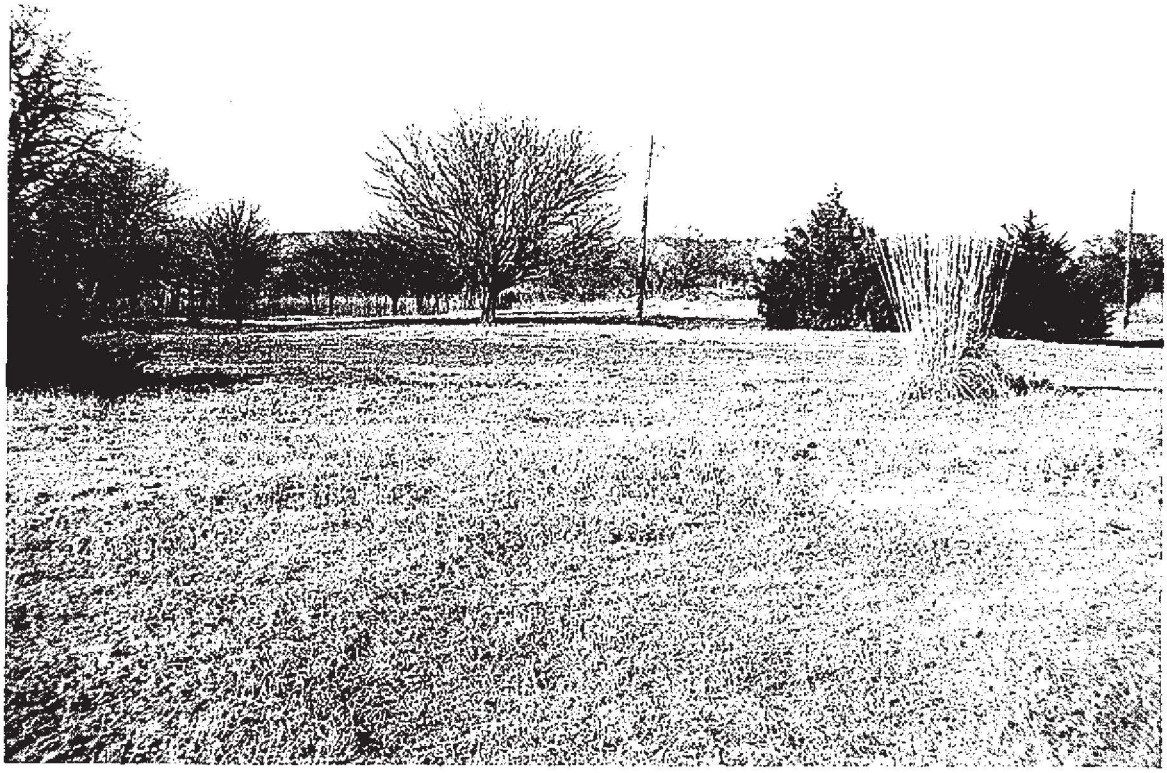
FIGURE 48
VEGETATION: MEADOW/PASTURE (1998)



Vegetation: Washita River Riparian (1997) FIGURE 49



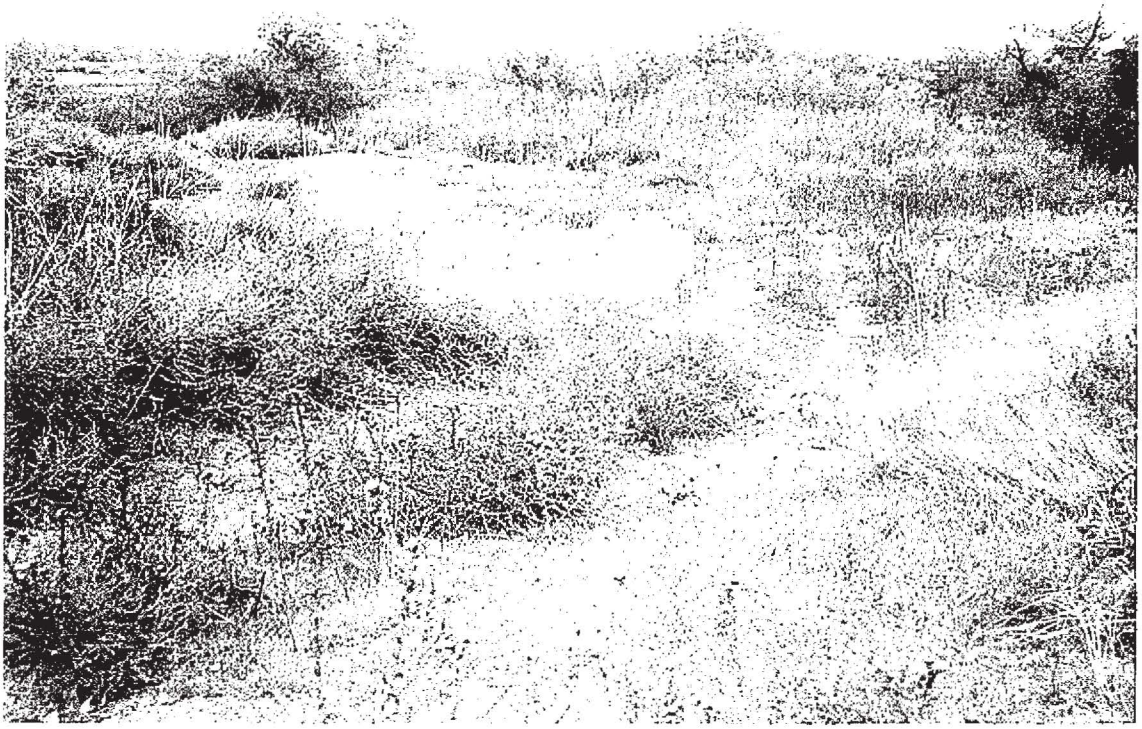
Vegetation: South Riparian (1997) FIGURE 50



Vegetation: Farmstead (former Wesner residence) (1997) FIGURE 51



Vegetation: Farmstead (east of former residence) (1997) FIGURE 52



Vegetation: Farmstead (former garden area) (1990) FIGURE 53



Vegetation: Farmstead (west of former residence) (1990) FIGURE 54

7 - Upland Range (Figs. 55,56)
Even though there are three soil types within this 46.5-acre area, vegetation varies more in percent cover than species present. For the most part, this area represents a typical loamy prairie community. Dominant plants include Little Bluestem, Sideoats Grama, Sand Sage, Downy Brome, Camphor Weed, Woolly Plantain, Tumble Grass, Purple Threeawn, and Golden Aster. A variety of other herbaceous material is present. On the 1997 map, #17, and #20 indicate specific vegetation in this area. #17 indicates the approximate location of the remains of a structure and a patch of tall herbaceous plants (e.g. ragweed, sunflower, elm) growing there. Around #20, near the small drainage, wheat was grown in the early to mid 1960s, and an earlier variety of Plains Bluestem was planted here in 1971-72.

8 - Area of previous Wheat Fields (Fig. 57)
These four areas, totally 67.2 acres, were terraced and used to grow winter wheat until 1997. In the Spring of 1998 the National Park Service undertook a weed mowing and replanting effort in these areas to reduce erosion potential of the fallow fields and to begin the restoration effort. The seed mix used in the reseeding was made up of the following grasses: Woodland Sand Bluestem, Barton Western Wheat, Cheyenne Indian Grass, Blackwell Switch Grass, Texoca Buffalo Grass, Cimarron Little Bluestem, El Reno Sideoats Grama, and Bends Sand Love Grass, in order of descending percentage.

9 - Panhandle Short Line Railroad (Fig. 58)
In spite of the poor soil quality along the railroad grade, a large number of plant species -- a mix of native and introduced -- are growing in this area. The soil is made up of excavated materials from local fields, cinders, and gravel. Trees present include American Elm, Hackberry, and Soapberry, and shrubs include Chickasaw Plum. Herbaceous vegetation, which accounts for the majority of plant cover, includes Little Bluestem, Cheat Grass, Kochia, Giant Ragweed, Sand Sage, Canadian Wildrye, Johnson Grass, Camphor Weed, Horse Weed, Wild Morning Glory, Yellow Sweet Clover, and Bundle Flower. As mentioned above, the remains of the American Elm shelterbelt grow along the north side of the railroad grade. Sumac, with it's strong red fall color, grows in clusters in the railroad grade area.

10 - Monument Overlook (Fig. 57)
Present within this area is a mixture of native and introduced grasses that are mowed routinely to a lawn appearance.

CONTRIBUTING
Contributing vegetation patterns and specific species are those likely to have been present at the time of the battle (see above); i.e. any existing vegetation characteristic of the historic period is contributing. In addition, the river and riparian area is the most significant zone within the core area, because it represents habitat that was critical for survival during the historic period, especially for Plains Indian groups.

NON-CONTRIBUTING
Extant noncontributing vegetation patterns and types/species include: the reduced riparian vegetation zone and the presence of pasture grasses and miscellaneous herbaceous material

in the floodplain where trees used to grow; all native and non-native plants unlikely to have been present during the historic period (e.g. tamarisk, sumac, Plains Bluestem, other non-native grasses); and the presence of taller trees in the upland areas, especially along drainages.

Cluster Arrangement

The arrangement of all the different elements of Chief Black Kettle's village is not known at this time, but is historically significant. While the present location of the 1930s replacement of the original U.S. Army monument is historic, the overall arrangement of the memorials, markers and facilities within the Monument Overlook area is not historic.

Structures

(Figs. 59-68)

The existing 1930s replacement of the original 1890 memorial and its present location is historically significant (Figs. 18, 59). The 1965 National Historic Landmark marker, the State granite monument, the National Historic Site sign, and the Overlook shelter and interpretive sign (Figs. 60-63) while indicating recent commemoration of the conflict and concern for public education, are not historically significant or contributing per se, but may have ethnographic value. Other structures within the Overlook area (parking bollards, picnic shelters, fencing, telephone pole, entry gate, and storage shed), while related to public enjoyment of the site and maintenance functions, are not in themselves historically significant or contributing (Figs. 64, 65). Throughout the core area, numerous fences and various other agricultural structures and features remain from recent agricultural and residential activity; these are non-contributing (Figs. 66-68). A more detailed description and analysis of structures will be included in the future List of Classified Structures inventory or Historic Structures Report for Washita.

Archeological Sites

(Fig. 69)

Archeological work completed to date is described in Lees et. al. 1997. Artifacts were found using on-site metal detector scanning and selective excavation. Artifacts mainly consist of firearms ammunition. Figure 69 shows the clustering of artifacts, indicating an important position of the 7th Cavalry during the conflict. In addition, geomorphologic study was conducted within the core area in 1995 and 1997 involving the excavation of a series of core samples. No artifacts related to the conflict or Chief Black Kettle's village were found in 1995; the 1997 report has not yet been finalized. See Natural Systems and Topography sections for a summary of findings regarding possible shifting of the Washita River and overall core area topography.



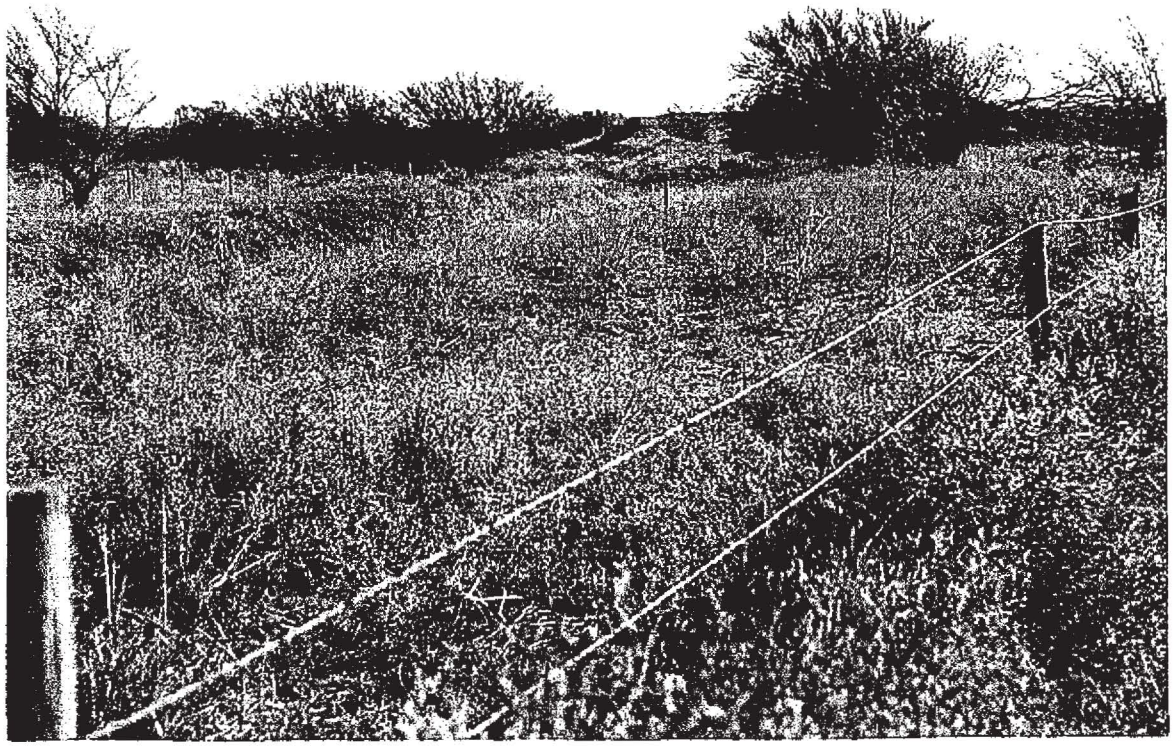
Vegetation: Former wheatfield – railroad grade area transition; south of river (1998) FIGURE 55



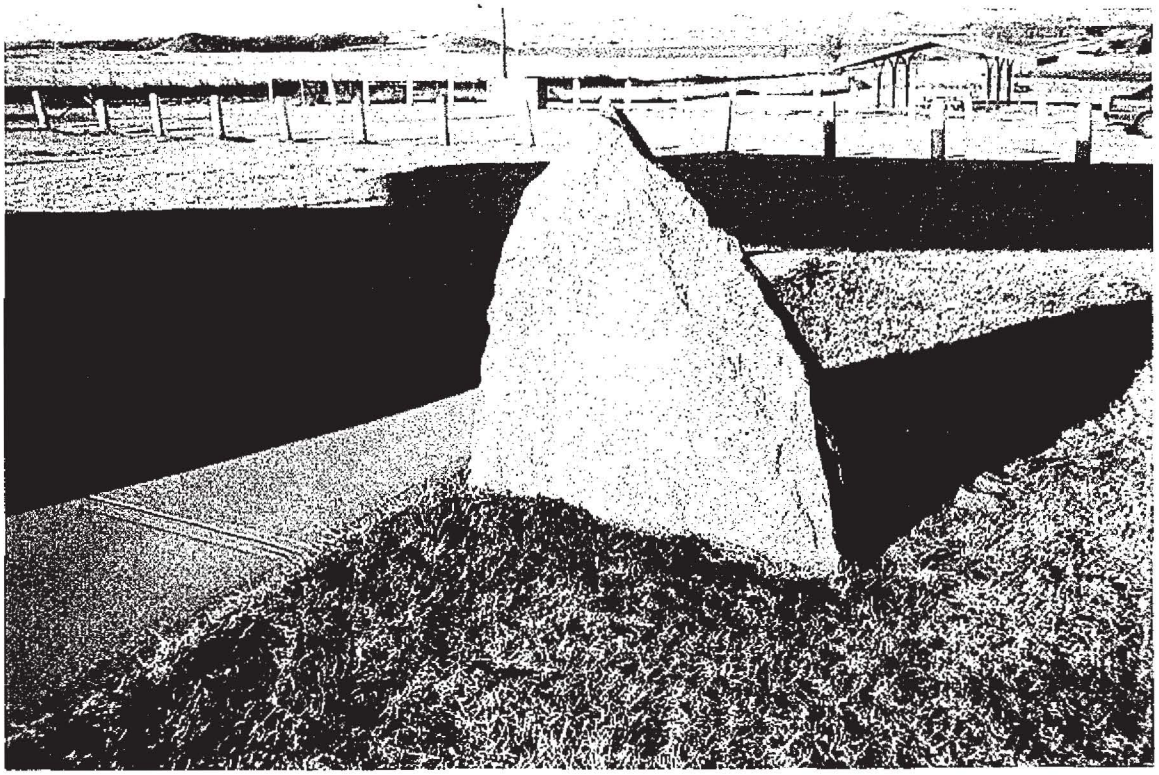
Vegetation: Upland Range grasses (east section) (1997) FIGURE 56



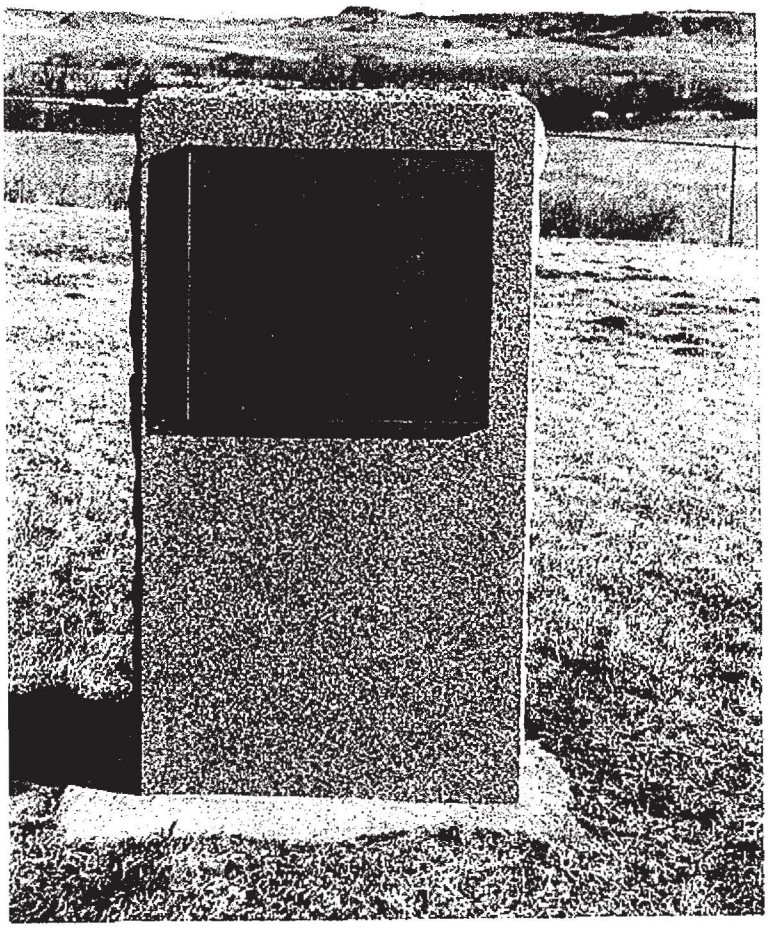
Vegetation: Overlook (foreground) & former wheat field area (midground) (1998) FIGURE 57



Vegetation: Railroad grade area (middle section of core area) (1997) FIGURE 58



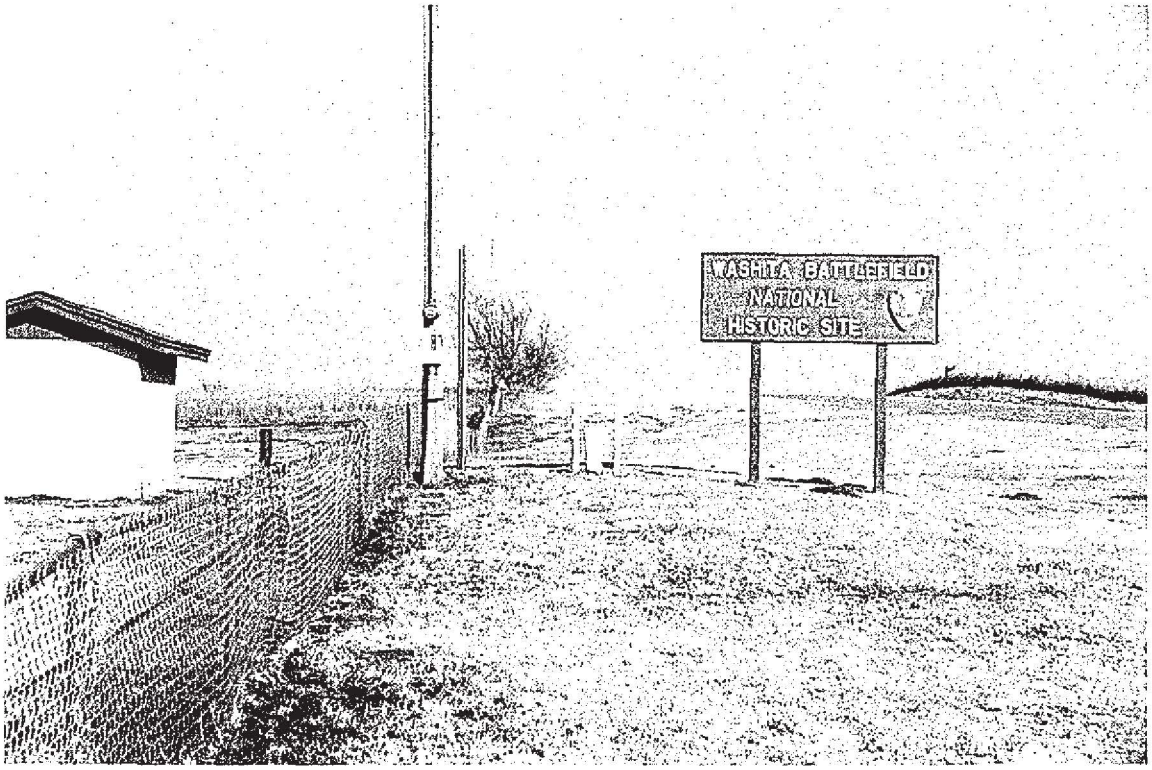
Structures: 1930s Monument (1997) FIGURE 59



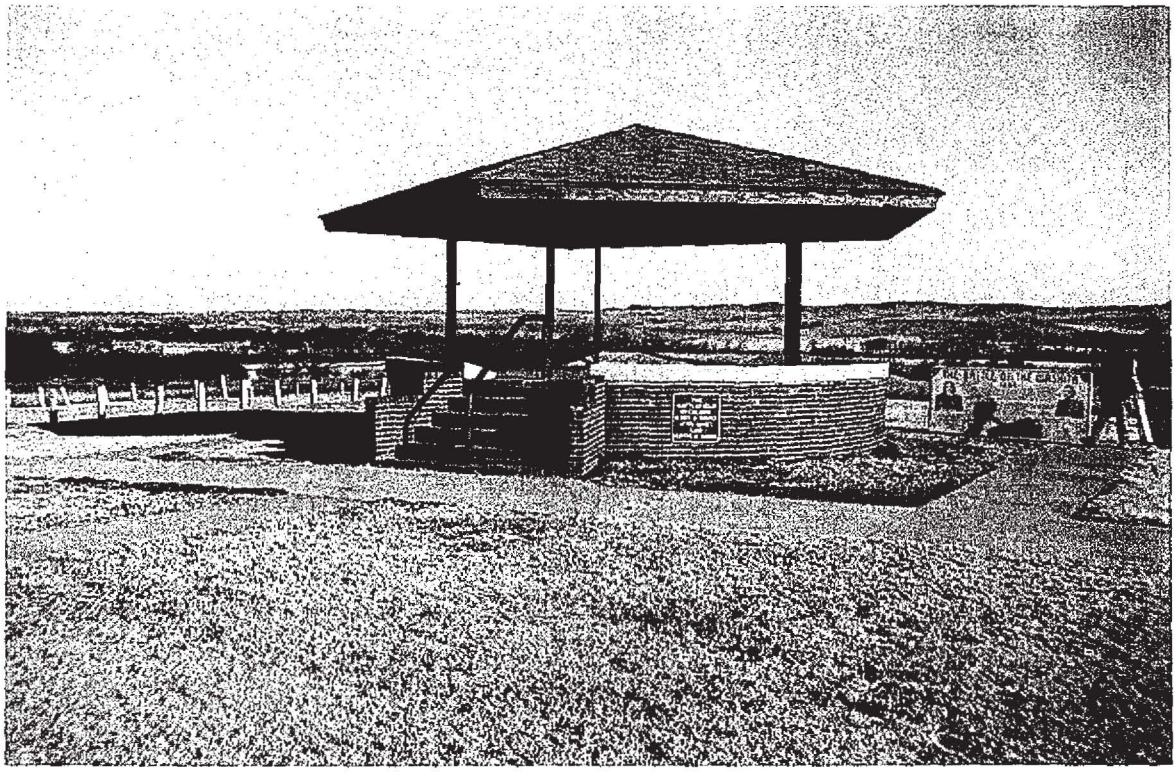
Structures: National (1997) FIGURE 60
Historic Landmark marker



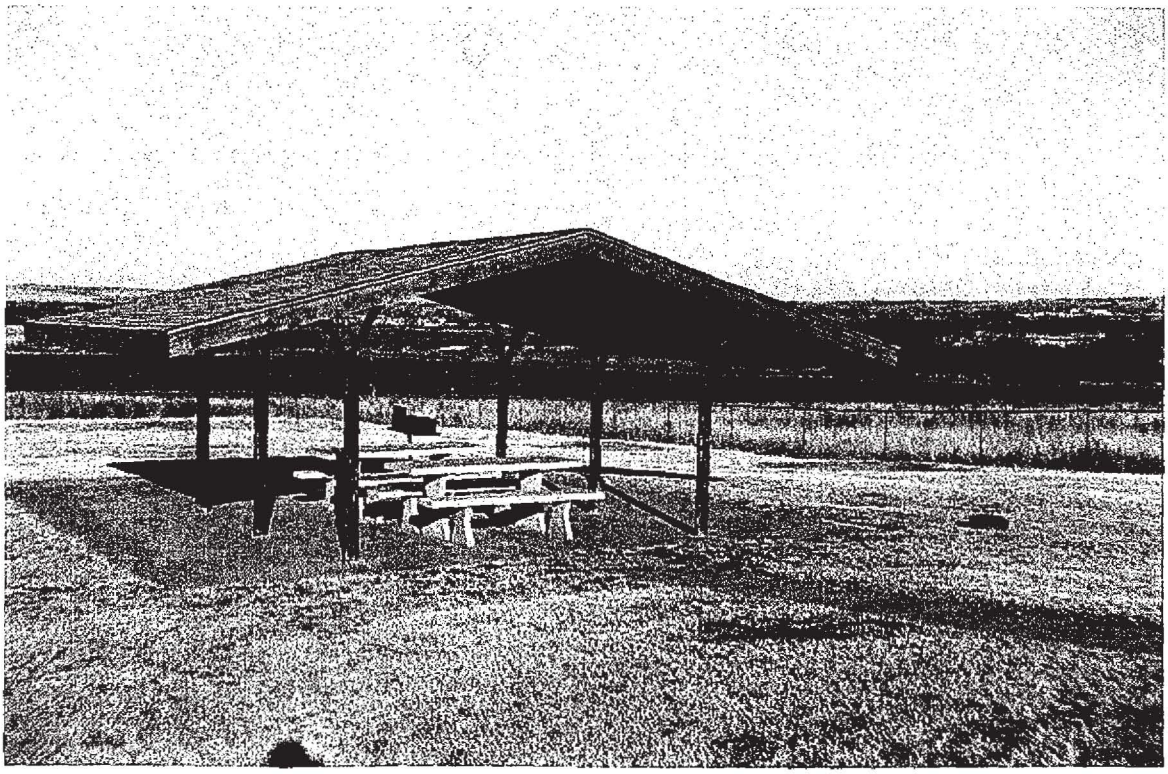
Structures: Granite monument (1997) FIGURE 61



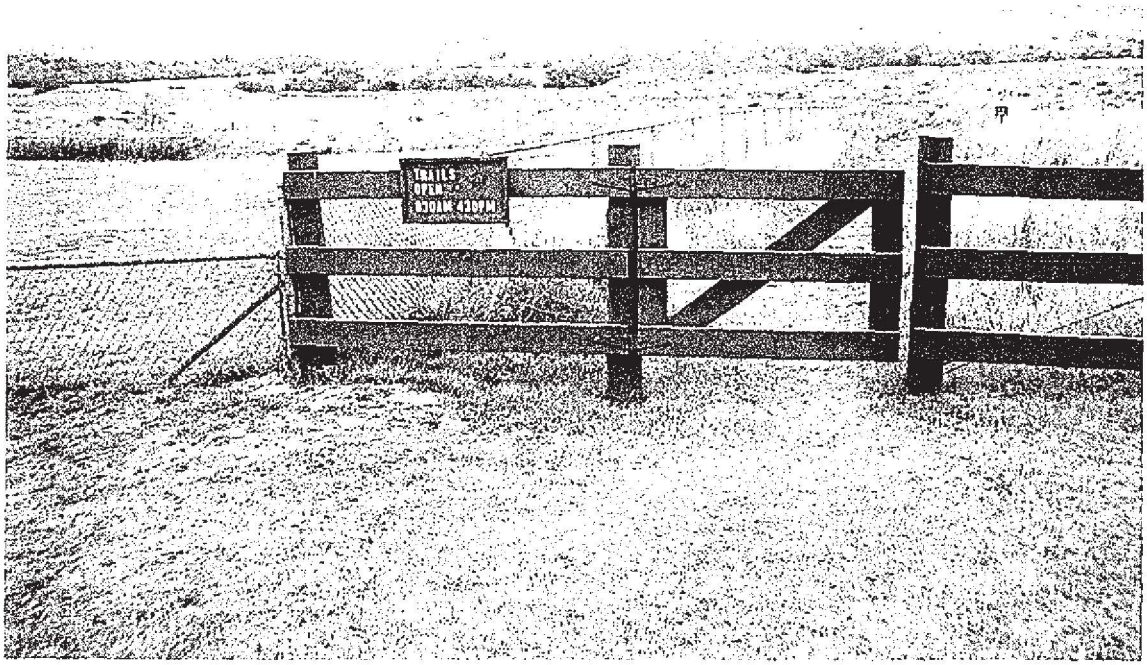
Structures: NHS Sign & Overlook (1998) FIGURE 62



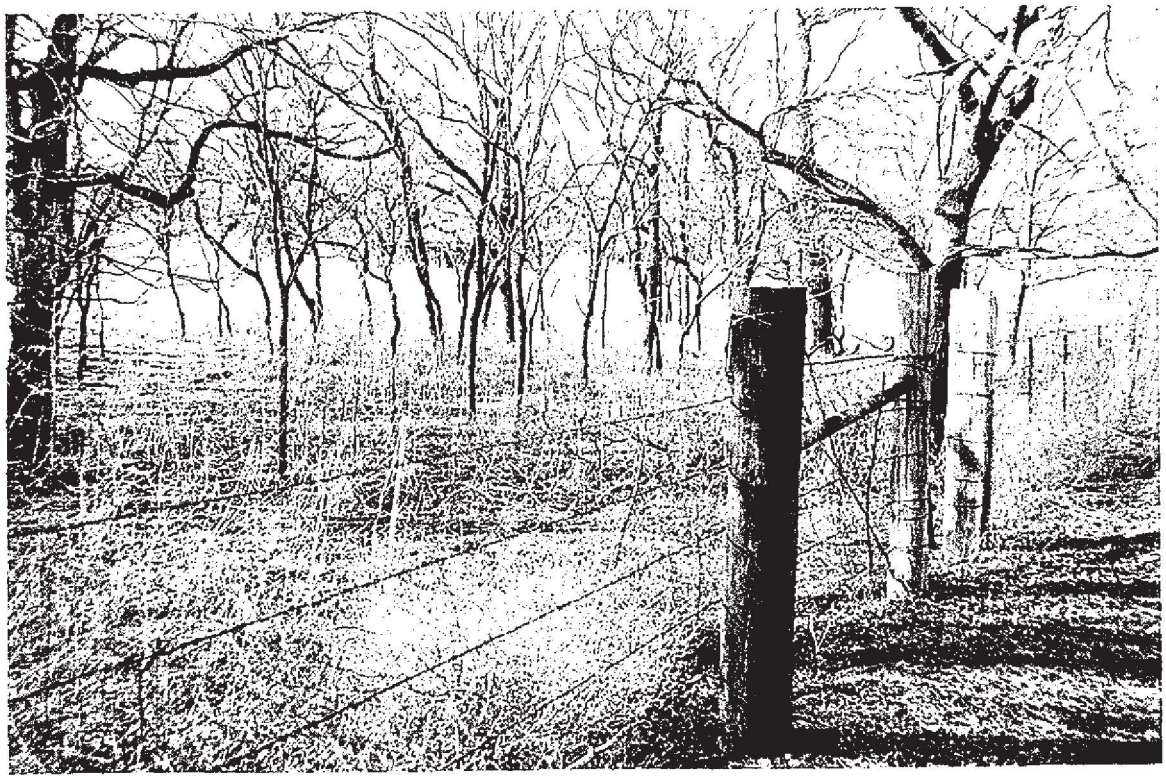
Structures: Overlook Shelter (1997) FIGURE 63



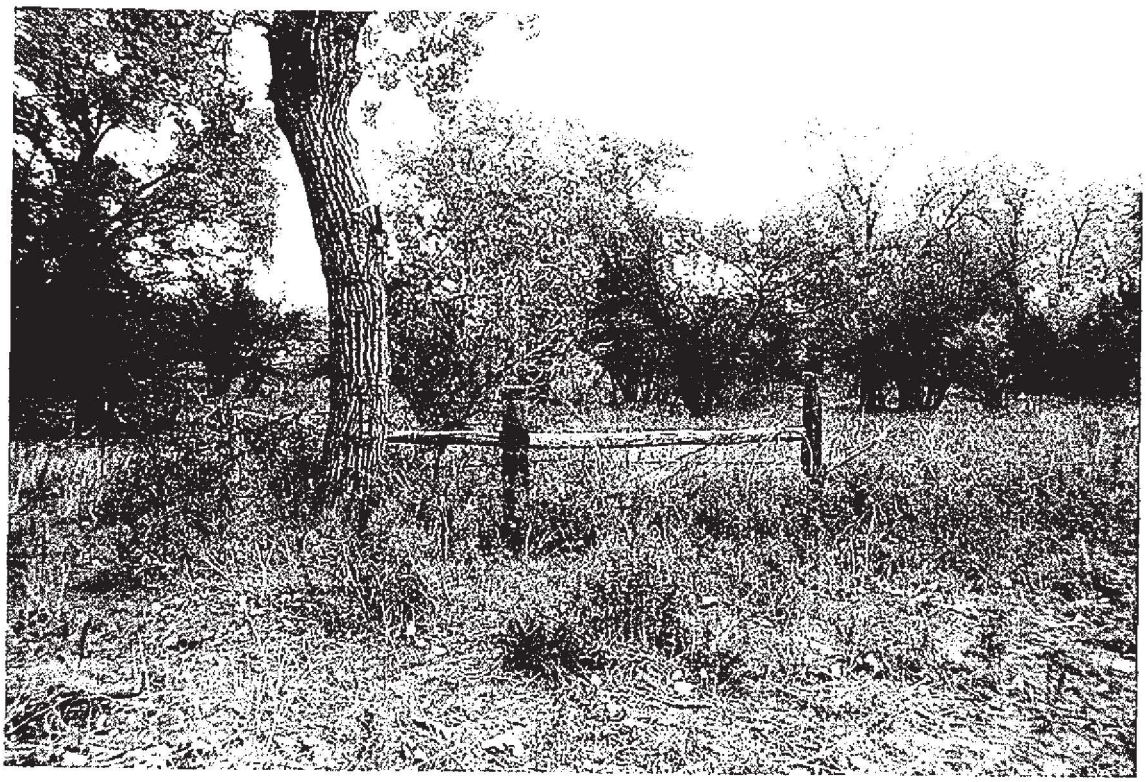
Structures: Picnic Facilities FIGURE 64



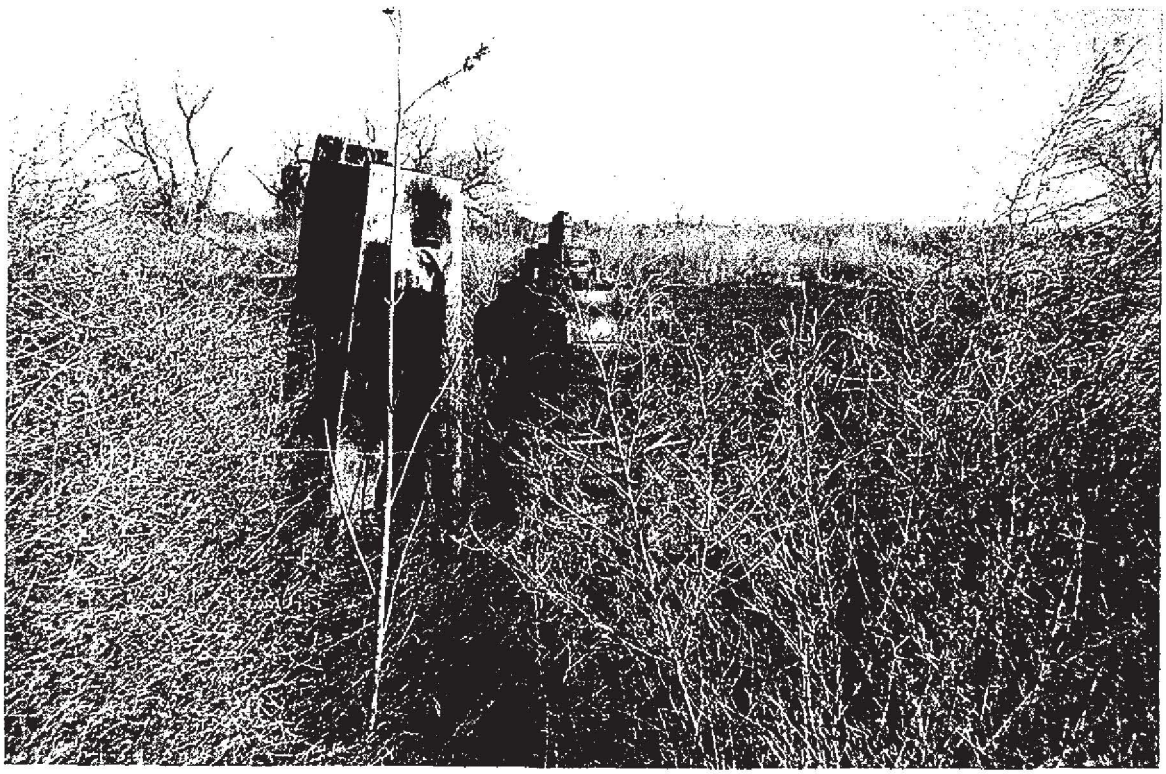
Structures: N.H.S. entry gate (1998) FIGURE 65



Structures: Farmstead fencing (1997) FIGURE 66



Structures: Fencing in N.E. corner (1998) FIGURE 67



Structures: Pump in former wheat field area (1997) FIGURE 68

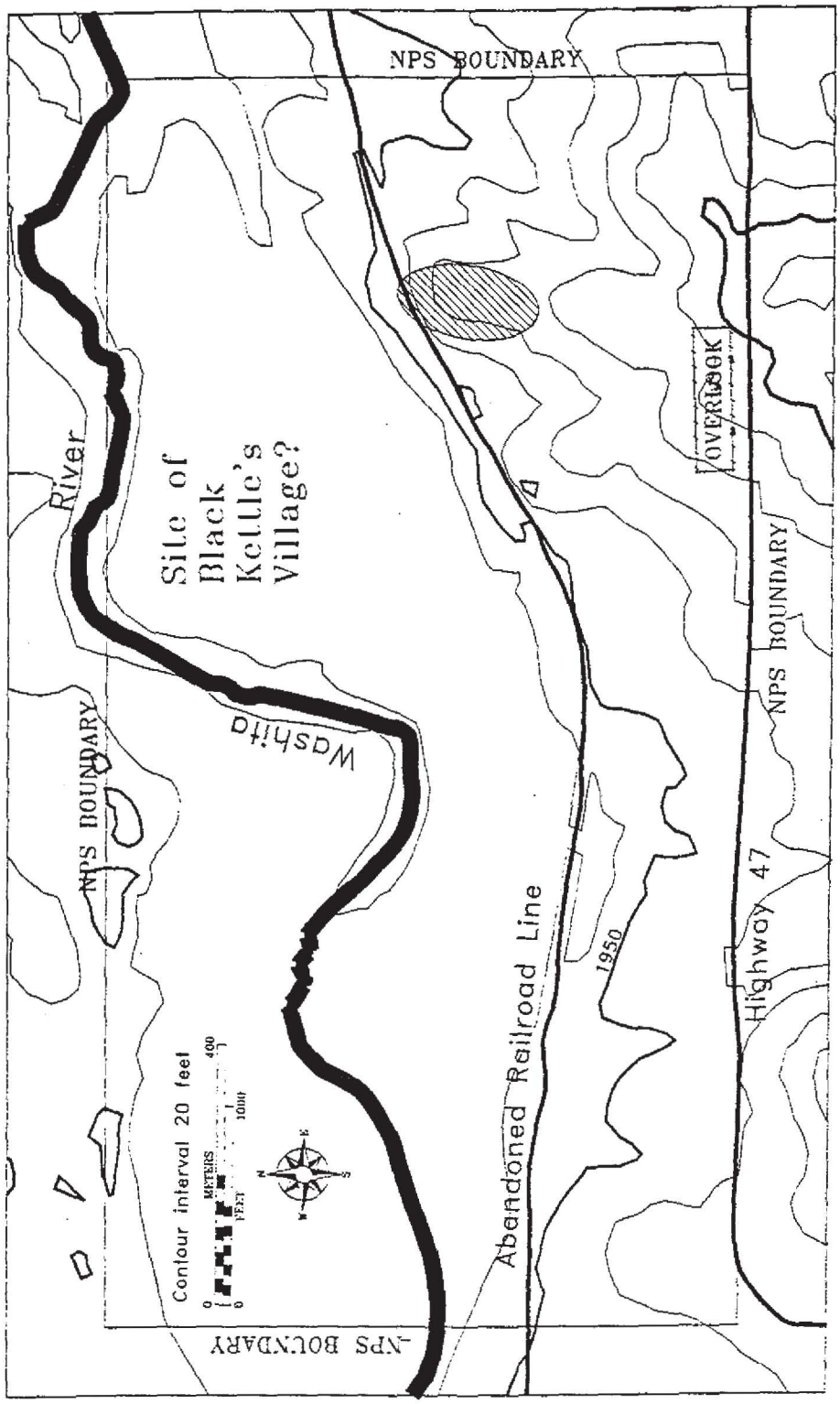


FIGURE 69

"SEVENTH CAVALRY POSITION"

Source: Lees et. al., 1998

Small-Scale Features

Small-scale features in the core area are for the most part described in the Structures section. The numerous prayer offerings that are tied to the Monument Overlook fence may be significant ethnographic resources. The Oral History project, and other ethnographic work, may identify other small-scale features having ethnographic significance.

Fauna

In 1868, the buffalo and pony herds would likely have been the major fauna present (seasonally) which are not present today. Cattle were moved off in late 1997. During the 1998 Vegetation Analysis survey, the following wildlife was observed (Stotts & DuBey, 1998):

North Bench -- turkey vultures, rabbit, gopher, deer , and bob-white quail.
North Floodplain -- armadillo, raccoon, bob-white quail
Meadow -- none noted
Washita River Riparian -- deer, turkey, beaver, raccoon, great blue heron, duck, and interior least tern
South Riparian -- turkey, raccoon, gopher, skunk, white-tailed deer, owls, bats, voles, glossy snakes
Farmstead -- none noted
Upland Range -- coyote, white-tailed deer, red-tail hawk, sand turtle, gopher, rabbit
Wheat Fields - none noted
Railroad - bobcat, prairie vole.

Stotts and DuBey listed the following species as Oklahoma Sensitive Wildlife species which ". . may be in the park at present or may migrate back into the park as historical vegetation becomes established." (Stotts & DuBey 1998, p. 31): Black tailed prairie dog (*Cynomys ludovicianus*), Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii*), Loggerhead shrike (*Lanuis ludovicianus*), Swainson's hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*), Earless lizard (*Holbrookia maculata*), Texas horned lizard (*Phrynosomia cornutum*), Texas longnosed snake (*Rhinocheilus lecontei*). The Interior least tern (*Sterna antillarum*) is mentioned on p. 16 as an endangered species that was observed during the survey and for which there may be several areas of suitable habitat along the Washita River Riparian zone.

Landscape Qualities

Contributing qualities include air quality, relative quiet, and the absence of the sounds, smells, and views of modern development. Air quality, including night sky visibility, may be reduced since 1868. Seasonal vegetation colors (e.g. dramatic fall colors), while attractive, are not contributing if the vegetation involved was not present during the historic period or if it has no ethnographic value.

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In the following reference list, materials used in this inventory are marked with an asterix (*). Others are listed for future reference and for use in preparing the Cultural Landscape Report.

Sources:
IMSF = National Park Service, Intermountain Support Office, Santa Fe
CLI = in Cultural Landscape Inventory files
CNR = in National Register files
OHS = Oklahoma Historical Society
Lib. = in OHS library
Arch. = in OHS Archives
WABA = Washita National Historic Site

MAPS:

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--1995, NPS "Washita Battlefield National Historical Site" map, #22,000A, 12/95, scale 1" = 900"
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--1972, Black Kettle Grassland, Oklahoma (NHL file; IMSF-CNR)
Battle sketches (NHL file / IMSF-CLI)
--1963 Roger Mills Country, General Highway Map, Sheet 2 of 2 (NHL file; IMSF-CNR)

PHOTOS:

--1993 USDA Forest Service color aerial photograph, 10/1/93, 16 613030, #24 (202) and #39 (203), scale approx. 1" = 1390'H.L. Scott, 1891, Site of Black Kettle Village. P-4385 Hensley Collection (NHL file). Various other photos by H.L. Scott (e.g. in Betty Wesner File, NHL file)
--Various, in NHL file, showing battlefield core area; no dates or descriptions
--General Scott 1890 - 1908. Terrain profiles with arrows. On file at Fort Sill.
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*Wesner, Betty, former landowner. 1997. Personal communication.

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*Whipple, A. W. *Reports of Explorations and Surveys, to Ascertain the Most Practicable and Economical Route for a Railroad from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean*, made under the direction of the Secretary of War, in 1853-4. Senate Executive Document No. 78, 33d Congress, 2d Session. Vol. III. Washington, D.C.: Beverly Tucker Printer, 1856.

*Yellowman, Gordon. Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribes. 1997-9. Personal communication.

*(no author given). n.d. Custer's Oklahoma Fight: An Old Scout Goes Over the Washita Battlefield. *Cheyenne Star*. Includes some comments on ownership and resource conditions of core area in 1904. (IMSF-CLI)

*(no author given). 1930. Article on Chief Magpie's account of the Washita conflict. *The Daily Oklahoman*, Sunday, November 23, 1930. (OHS Library)

Appendix - CLI Administrative and Management Information

INVENTORY SUMMARY

Completion Status:

__**XX**_Level 0 (Park reconnaissance survey) Date: **5/30/97** Recorder: **J. Cowley**
__**XX**_Level 1 (Inventory Unit (IU) reconnaissance survey) Date: **5/30/97** Recorder: **J. Cowley**
__**XX**_Level 2 (IU analysis & evaluation) Date: **11/99** Recorder: **J. Cowley**

Inventory Description:

The Level 0/1 inventory was prepared following the first two site visits, preliminary review of available literature and various documents, and several preliminary interviews. The information on the Level 0/1 form was intended to provide park, Support Office and other staff with some basic information, and was the point of departure for the more complete Level 2 inventory.

The Level 2 inventory was prepared following the third site visit. Level 2 addresses the area owned and managed by the National Park Service (NPS) at the time the inventory was completed, i.e. the 315.2-acre core area. This Level 2 will need to be updated in the future to incorporate results of on-going or planned studies (e.g. Historic Resource Study, Oral History Study, Vegetation Study, final Archeology report), and if any lands are added to the NPS boundary in the future.

On the basis of National Historical Landmark documentation and this Level 2 CLI, the Washita Core Area cultural landscape is found to be of sufficient significance and integrity, as a landscape, to warrant the completion of a Cultural Landscape Report.

Immediate threats to landscape integrity include the potential spread of exotic and non-native plants, the potential for degradation of Washita River water quality from nitrates from upstream agricultural operations, and on-site erosion.

Inventory Included a Site Visit: **Yes, three visits (March 4-6, 1997, March 3, 1998, and November 13, 1998)**

GENERAL LANDSCAPE INFORMATION

Figures 1 and 2 show the Washita region; Figures 3 and 4 show National Historic Landmark and National Historic Site boundaries.

Property Level:

Landscape: **Entire battlefield (Fig. 4)**
Component Landscape XX The NPS-owned core area is a component of the larger landscape (Fig. 3); core area component landscape is the focal area of the event - the location of Chief Black Kettle's village and the most intense fighting.

Site Name(s):

Historic: **Washita Battlefield**

Traditional: Cheyenne/other Native American name(s) for area, tbd

Current: **Washita Battlefield National Historic Site (NHS) (official)**

Other names proposed include: Washita Massacre NHS; Washita NHS

Origin of "Washita" - name has Choctaw origin, French version "Ouachita" (source: Bob Duke). Washita River called Lodge Pole River by Cheyenne (L. Hart, pers. comm.; B. Clark, 1887)

CLI Number: **tbd in CLAIMS**

Associated CLI Number(s): **tbd in CLAIMS**

Landscape:

Component Landscape:

Site Identification:

Park Alpha Code: **WABA**

Park/District Orgcode: **7720**

Management Unit:

Tract Number:

Region: **Intermountain**

Cluster: **Southwest**

State: **Oklahoma**

County: **Roger Mills**

Site Location:

U.S.G.S. Quad: **Cheyenne, Oklahoma, 15-minute series (1960)**

Other:

Inventory Unit Boundary Description: (Fig. 3) **The core area consists of the North 1/2 of Section 12, Township 13 North, Range 24 West. This inventory unit is a roughly rectangular area, the core area of the battlefield; bounded on the south by State Highway 47A, on the west by the west boundary of section 12 (the former Wesner property boundary), on the north by the north boundary of section 12 (in the northeast corner, the boundary runs north of the river, i.e. the river enters the core area on the west and exits on the east, and is contained within the NPS area), and on the east by the east boundary of section 12 (the former Wesner property boundary). The existing fence along in the northeast corner jogs south of the river, as a result of a landowner agreement to allow the landowner to the north to have access to the river. This existing fence line does not represent the boundary of the NPS area. The core area boundary is based on twentieth century land ownership in addition to historic resource values.**

Boundary UTMS: **tbd**

Center of core area: 3942000N, 436000E

Inventory Unit Size: **315.2 acres**

Landscape / entire battlefield area (National Historic Landmark) is about 3,000 acres (Fig. 4). Legislation states the core area is 326 acres; however, the NPS owns 315.2 acres.

Assessment of Overall Condition of Landscape:

Good	Poor
Fair XX	Unknown

The "fair" assessment was determined through discussion with the park Superintendent. The "fair" assessment is based on the presence of exotic and weed grasses and other non-native vegetation; the substantially altered spatial, circulation, and vegetation patterns; erosion; and the *presence of 20th century structural remains.*
(See Integrity Evaluation, below, for comparison of Integrity and Condition)

Assessment of Overall Level of Impact Severity:

Severe
Moderate XX
Poor
Unknown

Immediate Threats to Landscape:

Impending Development -
Release to Succession -
Adjacent Lands - future development on adjacent private lands may impact the viewshed of the core area
Other --erosion (e.g. north cut-off face of Custer Hill and along eastern stretch of Washita River); presence and potential spread of exotic/weed plants (e.g. salt cedar along the river *and Old World / Plains Bluestem grass in floodplain south of river; ragweed, cheat grass* and misc. weeds along railroad grade; see also vegetation section); degradation of Washita River water quality from introduction of nitrates from upstream agricultural *operations and commercial drilling* waste pits.
Unknown

Adjacent Lands Contribute to the Significance of the Landscape (Figs. 6-10)

Yes - the inventory area is a component of the entire Battlefield. Areas/features included on adjacent lands (some within NHL boundary) include: the site where Elliott and 19 of his men were killed; Elliott's troops' graves (approx. 6-8 miles downstream, east of Chief Black Kettle's village site, approx. at site of Sheridan's December 11, 1868 camp); location of winter encampment of Arapaho, Kiowa, Comanche, and other Plains Tribes (about 2-5 miles east of Black Kettle village site); Cheyenne women's death song site (just south of core area boundary); Twin Knolls, to which the Cheyenne (including Magpie) fled during the conflict (just south of core area boundary) (according to Rea 1997, p. 19-20, a large number of women and children were observed fleeing in the area of the knolls during the conflict); and the Osage scout observation knoll, where Chief Black Kettle's village was first observed (north of core area boundary).
No
Undetermined

Adjacent lands are included in this inventory - **No; cultural landscape values of adjacent areas need to be researched and addressed within the conservation easements developed for these areas, and in the context section of a Cultural Landscape Report.**

Site Plan - see List of Figures (Fig. 6)

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Landscape Type:
- Designed
- Vernacular
- **Historic Site XX**
- **Ethnographic XX**

Land Use: (see also Landscape History Narrative, below)

Historic: **Wintering/hunting area for Plains Tribes**
Battle/massacre site
Commemoration
not related to National Register significance:
Agricultural - farming/grazing
Transportation - railroad
Agricultural (wheat farming, cattle grazing)
Residential (extended family)

Current: **Historic site (memorial/commemoration, research, education)**

National Register Status:

ENTERED - Inadequately documented (as landscape)
Explanation:
Landscape is Listed on the National Register - **YES (National Historic Landmark)**
Landscape Documentation is **Incomplete - 1970 form is very brief. 1976 form recognizes military significance only, mentions use of topography in battle but doesn't describe landscape or character-defining landscape elements; briefly describes State monument area and describes events.**
Dates of Documentation: **National Register Form: Draft 1970, revised 1976, signed 1983**
Amendment to National Register Nomination: **Needed**

NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY

As part of the overall NHL National Historic Site, the core area is eligible and listed. (use "eligible -- Keeper" category in CLAIMS)

National Register Classification:
- **Site (on NHL form)**
- District
- Multiple Property

National Register Significance:
- International
- **National** (NHL form)
- **Tribal**
- State
- Local
- Not Significant

National Register Significance Criteria:

A - event(s) - Battle of the Washita

B - *person(s)* - *Chief Black Kettle, Lt. Colonel George A. Custer, Chief Magpie, Major Joel Elliott, Ben Clark, Medicine Woman Later, Major General Philip Sheridan, Walking Woman, Mahwissa, Monasetah, Captain Barnitz, and others*

D - research potential

Period of Significance and Historic Context(s):

Historic Site - start year 1868, end year 1868

Ethnographic Landscape - start year 1868, through present. Traditionally and non-traditionally associated groups ascribe significance to the core area, in relation to the historic conflict. (See also Ethnographic Values section)

From CLI Professional Procedures Guide:

Historic Context (Theme, Sub-theme, Facet)
(Directly related to NHL Significance)

I. Peopling Places
- **D. Ethnohistory of Indigenous American Populations**
  - **--Native Cultural Adaptations at Contact**
  - **--Establishing Intercultural Relations**
  - **--Varieties of Early Conflict, Conquest or Accommodation**
  - **--Native contributions to the Development of the Nation's Cultures**
- **F. Development of the English Colonies**
  - **--Military-Aboriginal American Contact and Conflict**

IV. Shaping the Political Landscape
- ***D. Political and Military Affairs, 1865-1939***
  - **--The Reconstruction Era, 1865-1877**

V. Developing the American Economy
- **C. Military-Aboriginal Contact and Conflict**
  - **--The Southern Plains**

From 1996 Revision of the National Park Service's Thematic Framework:

Peopling Places
- **--Ethnic homelands (Cheyenne, other Plains tribes)**
- **--Encounters, conflicts, and colonization (U.S. settlement, expansion from west and east, cultural conflict, U.S. imperialism)**
- **--Family, community, tribe, nation (direct and indirect impact of battle on Cheyenne and other tribes' wellbeing, lifestyle, cultural identity; direct and indirect impact of battle on U.S. soldiers and families, and on settler communities)**

Shaping Political Landscape
- **--Political ideas, cultures, and theories (U.S. Manifest Destiny, imperialism; compared with Tribal practices; responses to each other's ways)**

--Military institutions and activities (Plains tribes warrior ethic, inter-Indian group hostilities; compared with U.S. Military practices and methods)

Areas of significance: (From CLI Professional Procedures Guide):

Ethnic Heritage -- Native American
Military

National Historic Landmark Status: **YES (date:1965; theme: National Historic Landmark form indicates military only, under Area of Significance)**

World Heritage Site: **NO**

Potential Ethnographic Value

Ethnographic Survey Has Been Conducted:

XX__Yes-Ethnographic Values Identified, Information Restricted (Oral History Study, Warde 1999)
____Yes-Ethnographic Values Identified, Information Unrestricted
Description of Known Ethnographic Value:
XX__No--Values are Present, but not yet formally identified or assessed (Ethnographic Study is underway)

List Groups Potentially Associated With Landscape Historically and/or Currently:

Traditionally/historically - Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, Comanche, Plains Apache, Osage
Contemporary - All of the above (especially Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribes), plus local/regional agricultural community and Custer groups (e.g. Order of Indian Wars, Custer Battlefield and Museum Association, Little Bighorn Association)

Description of known Ethnographic value:
Very significant historical event for Cheyenne-Arapaho and other Plains tribes (see Significance section). Other values to be determined.

STATUS OF DOCUMENTATION

Overall Assessment of Documentation of the Cultural Landscape: **fair**
Documentation Checklist:

Document	Date	Adequately Addresses Landscape
Special Resource Study **Alternatives Study, Washita Battlefield National Historic Site, Western Oklahoma.**	**1970**	**No - includes generalized description of existing resource conditions only**
Historic Resource Study (HRS)	**on-going**	
Historical Base Map		
General Management Plan (GMP)	**on-**	

Document	Date	Adequately Addresses Landscape
	going	
Development Concept Plan (DCP)		
Resource Management Plan (RMP)	on-going	No - Park does have RMP statements for CLI and CLR, but RMP not completed yet
Land Protection Plan		
Cultural Landscape Report (CLR)		
Administrative History		
Other: **Interim Operations Plan**	1997	No - is an overall plan for area to be used prior to GMP completion; - does call for CLI completion, and mentions a number of landscape-related issues
Other: **National Historic Landmark nomination**	1976	No - see National Register section
Other: **Special Report on Washita Battlefield, 1964, Wm. Brown, for National Survey of Historic Sites & Buildings**	1994	No - is primarily history of events; does relate battle action to landscape elements, and includes brief landscape description in Appendix

Graphic Documentation:

Topography-- **20 ft contour existing**
Boundary-- **NPS Map #20,000A, 12/95**
Site Plan--
Other:

MANAGEMENT HISTORY

Management Category:

Must Be Preserved and Maintained - as National Historic Landmark. Preservation and maintenance refers to contributing elements; restoration/rehabilitation is on-going
Should Be Preserved and Maintained
May Be Preserved and Maintained
May Be Released, Altered, or Destroyed

Approved Treatment:
(approved through the NPS planning process) -- tbd in General Management Plan

Legislation calls for protection and preservation of the ". . national historic site, including the topographic features important to the battle site, artifacts and other physical remains of the battle, and the visual scene as closely as possible as it was at the time of the battle."

General Management Plan is on-going, park is operating under Interim Operations Plan.

Actions to date include:
Removal of Wesner 20th century residential and agricultural structures; some fencing and miscellaneous structural features remain
Re-seeding wheat field areas with native grass mix

Treatment	Completed	Document	Date
Stabilization			
Preservation			
Rehabilitation			
Restoration			
Reconstruction			
Neglect			
Destruction			
Undetermined			

Management Agreement(s): **tbd**

NPS Legal Interest: **NPS owns core area in fee simple**

Public Access to the Site: **At this time, there is general public access to the Overlook/memorial area and public access to the core area self-guided trail system (day-use only).**

CLI Bibliography addendum:
NRID#: tbd
HABS#: tbd
HAER#: tbd
ASMIS#: tbd
Sources: see listing above

Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Washita Battlefield

AND/OR COMMON
The Battle of the Washita

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
Northwest of Cheyenne U.S. 283 — NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN
Cheyenne — VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
6th

STATE
Oklahoma

CODE
40

COUNTY
Roger Mills

CODE
129

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
__DISTRICT	XX PUBLIC	X OCCUPIED	XX AGRICULTURE	__MUSEUM
__BUILDING(S)	XX PRIVATE	__UNOCCUPIED	__COMMERCIAL	X PARK
__STRUCTURE	__BOTH	__WORK IN PROGRESS	__EDUCATIONAL	__PRIVATE RESIDENCE
XX SITE	**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**	**ACCESSIBLE**	__ENTERTAINMENT	__RELIGIOUS
__OBJECT	__IN PROCESS	__YES: RESTRICTED	__GOVERNMENT	__SCIENTIFIC
	__BEING CONSIDERED	X YES: UNRESTRICTED	__INDUSTRIAL	__TRANSPORTATION
		__NO	__MILITARY	__OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Oklahoma Historical Society

STREET & NUMBER
Wiley Post Historical Bldg.

CITY, TOWN
Oklahoma City — VICINITY OF

STATE
Oklahoma

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
County Clerk's Office

STREET & NUMBER
Courthouse -- Main Street

CITY, TOWN
Cheyenne,

STATE
Oklahoma

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
None

DATE

__FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
__EXCELLENT	__DETERIORATED	__UNALTERED	XX ORIGINAL SITE
X GOOD	__RUINS	X ALTERED	__MOVED DATE_____
__FAIR	__UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Washita Battlefield lies in the center of Roger Mills County, which borders the Texas Panhandle. The essential features of the site are generally unchanged and the area of original military action stretches some six miles along the Washita River. Though the original features are the same, there have been a number of man made intrusions which prevent encompassing the entire area of military activity.

The city of Cheyenne now sits in the center of the six mile action area. Numerous roads and highways cut across the battlefield. However on the west side of the city is located the site of the Custer surprise attack which was the focal point of the Battle of the Washita. This area likewise is impaired by the construction of various roadways as well as the Panhandle and Santa Fe Railroad Line which cuts across a significant portion of the site of Black Kettle's camp.

The routes of attack are indicated on the accompany sketch map titled "The Battle of the Washita- November 27, 1868," prepared by the Oklahoma Historical Society and found in the Special Report on Washita Battlefield prepared by Historian William Brown. This map indicates that the area of fighting was concentrated on the plains at the bend of the Washita or at the site of Black Kettle's encampment.

The terrain of this battlefield was most important in the success of the campaign. Custer and his subordinate commanders used the various ridge lines and mountains as a shelter to completely encircle the camp and effectively reduce the escape route. Black Kettle's forces were thereby trapped in the valley, causing such a high number of killed.

The Oklahoma Historical Society has purchased a small number of acres on a secondary road, just west of Cheyenne. On this tract they have built a small park and observatory. In this area are two shelters with picnic tables, rest facilities and numerous interpretive markers. The most impressive facility is the observatory. A small round structure with a brick base the observatory sits on the knoll of the park and looks out over the battlefield area. Facing north one can see to the ridge line from behind which Custer made his attack. Directly in front of the viewer has been placed a map, similar to the accompanying map, and shown on an accompanying photograph, which locates the routes of advance, attack and pursuit. The landmark plaque sits to the north of the observation point and faces south.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE
__1600-1699	__ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	X MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
__1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER
X 1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION
__1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)
		__INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The cultural collision between white man and Indian reached its tragic climax in the post-Civil War years on the Great Plains. The white pioneer-settler--with his farms, villages, rails and roads-- aimed to domesticate the land, to own it, to locate permanently upon it. The nomadic Plains Indian-- with his horse, mobile home and migratory buffalo herds-- aimed to adapt to bluntiful nature, not conquer and subdue it. Two such diametrically opposed philosophies were like flint and steel; whenever they met sparks flew.

The Battle of the Washita, November 27, 1868, was the first victory in a campaign destined to bring an end to the Plains Indian barrier. By demonstrating that U. S. troops would fight in the winter when the Indians preferred to be left alone, it dealt a heavy blow to Indian morale. It also demonstrated the practicality and effectiveness of winter campaigning in the long struggle against the hostile Plains Indians.

General Sheridan's six-month Winter Campaign of 1868-69 was spearheaded by Col. George A. Custer's 7th Cavalry. After a hard, forced march through heavy snow, Col. Custer and 800 men made a surprise dawn attack on the village of Black Kettle, the peace leader of the southern Cheyenne. The soldiers laid waste to the town and destroyed a large herd of horses. When they departed with fifty-three women and children as prisoners, they left behind over one hundred dead warriors, including Chief Black Kettle.

The Battle of the Washita exerted a severe psychological impact, and thousands of Indians, their security shattered, broke camp and fled. Similar operations followed during this campaign, and by spring all of the southern tribes had been forced onto the reservations set aside for them. The continuation of this brutal strategy brought an end to the resistance of the Plains Indians.

The Washita Battlefield lies in the center of Roger Mills County, which borders the Texas Panhandle. The essential features of the site are generally the same and the area of Army and Indian activity stretches some six miles along the Washita River. The verdant valley, sheltered by surrounding hills, has scarcely changed in nearly a century.

History

Government policy had been to insulate Indians from whites by means of a vast Indian territory comprising the Great Plains between Missouri and the Rocky Mountains. But in the decade of the 1840's the Indian frontier was breached, and by the end of the Civil War land-hungry settlers were penetrating the plains along the river valleys. Thus, the Indian hunting grounds were encroached upon from the east. To the west were inhospitable mountains and deserts-- and more white men of the eastward moving mining frontier. The Indian had his back to the wall. No longer could he strike at the white man, then retreat into the wilderness. He had to stand fast and protect his way of life.

During the spring and summer of 1868 the Southern Plains ran red with blood. From the Platte to the Rio Grande, from Council Grove to Denver, the Indians went to war. Operating in small bands of 50 to 100 warriors, they swept through the inadequate frontier defense system and spread death and destruction to those who had encroached their domain. Cheyennes and Arapahoes struck in Kansas and Colorado. Comanches and Kiowas raided in Texas and New Mexico. Knowing every water hole in this arid region, traveling lightly and swifty from place to place, living off the land, the Indians seemed to appear out of nowhere to pillage and burn-- they then disappear with the same alacrity. When the supply-ladden army troopers attempted to follow the war parties, the Indians dispersed in all directions, reuniting again at some prearranged meeting place a hundred miles distant.

Confounded by these tactics General Phil Sheridan was forced to develop a strategy that would counteract the Indians. Sheridan's experience with the Plains Indians during the 1868 raiding season convienced him that only a strong offensive blow could halt these depredations. He had learned, too, the rhythm of the seasons that set the pattern of Indian warfare and dictated the strategy of reprisal.

The fast striking war parties and combined efforts of tribes produced Indian fighting in the spring and summer when war ponies were nourished on rich plains grass. Winter was a different matter. Then the horse herds starved and the ponies were unfit for all but the most limited service. Plains blizzards forced the Indian into sheltered breaks and river valleys where he could warm himself by his tepee fire. In his refuge, immobilized by the condition of his horses, surrounded by his women and children, the Indian was vulnerable. His only protection was isolation and brutal weather.

General Sheridan proposed to ally himself with the weather. He would thus expose his troopers to hardship and suffering. He would go counter to the advice of scouts and plainsmen, who pronounced the sleet and ice and snow of winter an insurmountable barrier to the prosecution of a successful winter campaign. But if he could pull it off, a successful winter campaing--possible because they army could transport its forage and supplies in wagons--could not only punish the guilty Indians, but would destroy their belief that winter protected them from reprisal for thier summer misdeeds. It would be a psychological blow of the first magnitude-- a revolution in plains warfare. Thus Sheridan settled on a winter campaign, the most formidable yet undertaken and one that would set the pattern for the final defeat of the Plains Indians.

Sheridan planned a 6 months' campaign, one that would keep the Indians reeling throughout the winter. It was decided by General Sheridan that the 7th Cavalry spearhead the campaign. Custer had made the 800-man command an elite corps.

The general plan for the battle called for the 800-man command to break up into four attack groups of 200 men each, surround the village in the remaining hours of darkness, and at the first light strike the Indians from all sides. Major Elliot was to take the first group and circle east. Capt. William Thompson, with the second group, was to circle right and take the Indians from the southwest. These two columns set out at once for they had to march several miles to reach their attack points. The third detachment, commanded by Captain Edward Meyers, moved to the right into the timber about an hour before daylight. Custer's column, accompanied by the band, the Osages, the scouts, and the sharpshooters, prepared to charge frontally from the crest of the hill where the horse herd and village had been discovered. Lt. James Bell, in charge of the ammunition wagons, was to wait until the firing began, then make a dash for the village.

With devastating results, on the morning of November 27, 1868, General George A. Custer and the 7th Cavalry, operating from Camp Supply, 70 miles to the north, surprised and wiped out the forces of Black Kettle. At dawn the 7th charged the camp from three directions. Surprised and stunned, the Indians were driven from their lodges out into the snow and the awaiting sabers of the 7th. Completely sacking the village and destroying the pony herd, Custer escorted a large number of prisoners back to Camp Supply.

After celebrating the trememdous victory with a parade, Custer immediately went into a huddle with Sheridan and reported the results of the battle. He claimed 102 warriors killed (bodies later found on the field raised this total by a third), 53 women and children prisoners, and total destruction of the village.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Custer, Geroge A., My Life on the Plains (New York, 1873)
Godfrey, E. S. "Some Reminiscences of the Washita Battle," Cavalry Journal, October, 1928.
Whittaker, Frederick, Life of Gen. George A. Custer (New York, 1876)
"Washita Battlefield" special study by William E. Brown, in National Historic

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 12 sq. miles - 7,680 acres

UTM REFERENCES

	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A	14	43,95,00	39,47,20,00
B	14	43,95,00	39,41,75,00
C	14	43,38,00	39,41,60,00
D	14	43,38,50	39,41,45,00

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See Continuation Sheet

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
Joseph Scott Mendinghall, Historian

ORGANIZATION
Historic Sites Survey - National Park Service

DATE
6/13/76

STREET & NUMBER
1100 L Street NW.

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN
Washington

STATE
D.C.

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) NATIONAL ___ STATE ___ LOCAL ___

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the *criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.*

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Form No. 10-300a
(Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Washita Battlefield

CONTINUATION SHEET ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

The boundary encompasses the area of the primary focus of the battlefield--Black Kettle's campsite (outlined in red on the USGS map)--as well as the area of primary military maneuvers as shown on the accompanying copy of the Oklahoma Historical Society sketch map entitled "The Battle of the Washita, November 27, 1968."

Beginning at the northwest corner of sec. 26, T.14 N., R.24 W. proceed east along the northern section lines of secs. 26 and 25, T.14 N., R.24 W. and secs. 30 and 29, T.14 N., R.23 W. but along the line of sec. 29 only to the intersection of that line with the west right-of-way of U.S. Route 283; thence south along said right-of-way to a point about 500 feet north of the city limits of Cheyenne; thence west one mile; thence south about 1200 feet to the intersection of the north edge of a light-duty road; thence west along this north edge extended in a straight line to a point of intersection with the west section line of sec. 11, T.13 N., R.24 W.; thence north along this line extended along the west section line of sec. 2, T.13 N., R.24 W. and secs. 25 and 26, T.14 N., R.24 W., to the point of beginning. 35

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