HISTORIC RESOURCE STUDY

WASHITA BATTLEFIELD NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

OKLAHOMA

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CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CHAPTER 1: Origins

CHAPTER 2: War or Peace

CHAPTER 3: Depredations

CHAPTER 4: Movements and Strategies

CHAPTER 5: Camp Supply

CHAPTER 6: Closing Proximity

CHAPTER 7: Washita

CHAPTER 8: End Results

CHAPTER 9: Controversies

CHAPTER 10: Monumentation and Resources

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Army Casualties at the Washita

Appendix B: Known Village Fatalities at the Washita

Appendix C: Other Known Village Occupants

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

(Illustrations forthcoming)

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Chapter One: Origins

The Great Plains, home to the Cheyenne Indians during the late eighteenth century and all of the nineteenth century, lie east of the Rocky Mountains and west of the Mississippi River and stretch north from the Rio Grande into Canada. Geomorphologists have long referred to those areas encompassing the present state of Nebraska, the western two-thirds of Kansas and Oklahoma, eastern Colorado, and the Texas panhandle, as components of the central part of the Great Plains Province. This central zone, major parts of which were inhabited by the Cheyennes, is essentially a region of transition between woodlands to the east and desert to the west and is variously characterized by east-to-west rising escarpments that produce an almost interminable flatness but often include dissected terrain, sub-humidity and gradually increasing aridity, decreasing forest cover, diverse erosional effects, and short grasses. Elevation ranges from extremes of 5,000 to 6,000 feet above sea level near the Rockies to 1,500 feet at their eastern limit. The neighboring Central Lowland Province protrudes diagonally northeast-to-southwest from eastern Kansas through central and southwest Oklahoma, injecting its characteristic topography of hardwood forests intermixed with rolling prairie. The physiography of the Central Region also includes a provincial subdivision called the High Plains, a broad mostly treeless plateau less eroded (thus generally higher) than the surrounding country, which includes eastern Colorado, the Texas panhandle, and the western parts of Oklahoma, Kansas, and Nebraska.[1]

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[1]Nevin M. Fenneman, *Physiography of Western United States* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1931), pp. 1-11; William D. Thornbury, *Regional Geomorphology of the United States* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1965), pp. 287-90; Warren A. Beck and Ynez

The surface of the Great Plains is mantled by eons of soil-creating fluvial deposition carried by streams from the mountains and laid upon a geologic marine-rock base as a graded "apron of debris." Several primary watercourses and their tributaries drain the central part of the Great Plains Province. These are, from north to south, the Platte River, one branch of which heads in the Colorado mountains before coursing northeast then east through southern Nebraska to ultimately feed into the Missouri River; the Republican, tracing through eastern Colorado and along the southern fringe of Nebraska before dipping southeast into east-central Kansas where it joins the Kansas, or Kaw, River, an affluent of the Missouri; the Smoky Hill River and its tributary Solomon and Saline forks and their own collateral streams, all of which merge into the Kansas; the Arkansas River, knifing east from the Rockies through southern Colorado and Kansas; several of the latter stream's own tributaries--the Cimarron, North Canadian, and South Canadian--which variously undulate southeastwardly across the scape of southwestern Kansas, western Oklahoma, and northern Texas; and the Red River, which flows east from the Texas Llano Estacado to the Mississippi and today forms the south boundary between Oklahoma and Texas. The region is noted for warm summers and cold winters marked by low precipitation, frequent and strong winds, occasional drought, and rapidly changing temperatures.[2]

D. Haase, *Historical Atlas of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), map 2 (Geomorphic Provinces); Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1931), pp. 3-17.

[2]Fenneman, *Physiography of Western United States*, p. 6 (map); Thornbury, *Regional Geomorphology*, pp. 289-90; Beck and Haase, *Historical Atlas of the American West*, map 1 (Relief); Robert W. Baughman, *Kansas in Maps* (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1961), p. 7; Webb, *The Great Plains*, pp. 17-26; Carl Frederick Kraenzel, *The Great Plains in Transition* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955), pp. 12-23; Charles B. Hunt, *Natural Regions of the United States and Canada* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman Company, 1974), pp. 344-47, 360-61.

Grass is the dominant natural feature of the Great Plains. Beyond the trees and shrubs bordering its water courses, much of the central plains area is covered by vast carpets of short, shallow-rooted native grasses known as grama, buffalo, and wire grass that is nurtured by soils high in alkaline and low in moisture reflective of the regional climate profile. Depending on specific area and/or moisture conditions, this vegetation is occasionally intermixed with other taller grasses, as well as with sagebrush, yucca, small cactus, and other plants. The semi-arid character of the region has dictated an adapted ability for many plant species to become dormant over periods of drought pending renewal with the coming of revitalizing rains in the late summer or fall. Precipitation is a constant determinant of the vitality of grass cover on the Plains; the variability of rainfall, shortages of which sometimes threaten endangerment of the sod cover, has historically impacted the region.[3]

The presence of grasses, along with their type, determined the species of animals that came to adapt themselves to the Great Plains environment, which in turn influenced the region's initial human habitation. The mammals shared similar attributes grounded in such survival qualities as speed, mobility, stamina, and endurance, keen vision and/or smell, and the abilities to masticulate different kinds of forage and conform their water needs with its often alternating availability. Creatures such as mice, prairie dogs, jackrabbits, pronghorns, and deer--even grasshoppers-- provided ready food sources for coyotes and wolves. But it was the American bison (*bison americanus*), or buffalo, whose presence dominated the plains during historic times. Traveling in herds occasionally registered as being in the millions, the beasts were large,

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[3]Kraenzel, *Great Plains in Transition*, pp. 29-34; Webb, *The Great Plains*, pp. 27-33; Fenneman, *Physiography of Western United States*, pp. 88-90. For mean annual rainfall in the region, see Beck and Haase, *Historical Atlas of the American West*, map 3.

ungainly, and slow, with weak vision and little fear of sound. Mostly, they grazed placidly, but were capable of summoning great speed and mobility when alarmed. Readily adapted to the plains environment, the buffalo possessed stamina and endurance for climatic extremes of great cold or heat. They consumed grass, and their evolved physiology permitted them to survive long periods without food or water. On the Great Plains of the eighteenth century they were ubiquitous, and their presence explained one important reason for the ultimate habitation there of native peoples during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[4]

Humans occupied the Great Plains for thousands of years before the more recent fluorescence of the Plains Indian culture in the area. Prehistory witnessed a somewhat intermittent succession of habitation that began as early as 10000 B.C. and continued into the fifteenth century. The earliest human denizens included big game hunters who pursued mammoths and other large mammals for subsistence. Following periods of fluctuating temperature and precipitation (5000-2000 B.C.), during which the region was seemingly largely devoid of human presence, hunters and gatherers reentered the region and foraged for smaller game and vegetal foods while also hunting bison. By 250 B.C. to A.D. 1000, more woodland influences reached the Great Plains, transmitted from the Mississippi and Ohio river valleys, and mostly located in the eastern parts of the region. These woodland complexes gave way, in circa A.D. 900-1000, to plains village peoples who hunted and raised corn and lived relatively sedentary existences in communities along rivers and streams in the eastern edge of the Plains,

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[4]Kraenzel, *Great Plains in Transition*, pp. 34-40; Webb, *The Great Plains*, pp. 33-44, 52. For factors bearing on the buffalo on the plains, see William T. Hornaday, *The Extermination of the American Bison* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889); Martin S. Garretson, *The American Bison* (New York: New York Zoological Society, 1938); and Tom McHugh, *The Time of the Buffalo* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972).

but who often ventured west to the edge of the high plains to plant corn and seek game. These people manifested cultural traits that set them apart from earlier occupants, such as multifamily earthen dwellings in fixed villages often protected with ditches and stockades, pottery, and varieties of artifacts fashioned from stone, shell, horn and other materials. For reasons not altogether understood, but possibly because of drought conditions or enemies, later generations of the village Indians had withdrawn east and when first encountered by whites in the sixteenth century were living in fewer but larger communities generally along larger streams. Many of the village Indians by this time represented fusions and coalescing of earlier groups. These relatively large-populated agrarian societies, some of which embraced precursors of many of today's native peoples, seem to have peaked in the period between 1500 and 1750.

It was these proto historic peoples whose cultures were first impacted by the presence of horses, initially introduced by Spaniards in the course of their early explorations in the New World. Bearing attributes of strength, mobility and stamina, together with propensities for eating grass and other vegetation, the animals would modify certain traits already present in these societies and influence radical change in life way and economy. Many historic village tribes had roots that have been definitely or speculatively traced to the prehistoric occupants of earth- and grass-lodge villages in the eastern plains. As well, white men exploring the southern plains region in the sixteenth century encountered semi-agricultural pedestrian bison hunters who had likely entered the Plains from areas in western Canada. These people seemingly were gone by 1825, perhaps driven out by horse-mounted buffalo hunting tribesmen entering the area from the

west and east.[5]

Among the incipient plains peoples who inhabited the prairies east of the Great Plains were a group of Algonkian hunters, fishermen, and agriculturalists who lived in earthen lodges. They called themselves *Tsistsistsas*, meaning "The Human Beings," or "The People," but in time were known as "Cheyennes," probably given them by a Siouan-speaking neighboring tribe and meaning "crazy talkers," a reference to their language. The semisedentary people lived in the area of the western Great Lakes and upper Mississippi River, but had migrated west to occupy the buffalo prairies east of the Missouri River by the mid-to-late seventeenth century. With their acquisition of horses in the early eighteenth century, along with pressures from neighboring tribes, their migration proceeded. They joined and incorporated with another Algonkian group, the Suhtais, bison hunters who introduced some, and helped solidify other, religious elements of Cheyenne society, and the people thereafter gradually abandoned most of their horticultural life ways and assumed the cultural characteristics of the classic buffalo hunting-tipi dwelling complex that typified the Great Plains Indians by the early nineteenth century. In time, the ten bands of the Cheyennes occupied lands beyond the Black Hills as far north as the Yellowstone River and south to below the Platte River. During the period of changing economies and migration, the Cheyennes had developed a strong friendship and relationship with the Arapahos, also Algonkian speakers possibly from the area of northern Minnesota who themselves had

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[5]This synopsis of prehistoric occupation of the plains is drawn from Waldo R. Wedel, "The Great Plains," in Jesse D. Jennings and Edward Norbeck (eds.), *Prehistoric Man in the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 193-220; and Waldo R. Wedel, *Prehistoric Man on the Great Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961). See also, Jesse D. Jennings, *Prehistory of North American* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1974), pp. 265-80; and Webb, *The Great Plains*, pp. 52-60.

relocated during the 1700s. The Cheyenne-Arapaho alliance, which included intertribal marriage, was founded as much upon mutual enmity toward the various Sioux tribes' regional domination as upon mutual trade proclivities.

In their societal organization, the Cheyennes' basic structure was the band, and it pervaded all aspects of tribal life. Spiritually, the people revered four sacred medicine arrows of supernatural origin and the heart of their tribal religious belief. The sacred arrows, or *mahuts*, embodied the Cheyennes' future welfare regarding subsistence and protection. They also exalted the sacred buffalo hat, *Is siwun*, which had been introduced by the Suhtais and possessed powers respecting tribal health and well-being. These articles, forever in the charge of hereditarily designated keepers, coupled with the Sun Dance, were together the inspiration of Cheyenne existence. Politically, the Cheyennes were guided by the council of chiefs (council of forty-four), consisting of older and widely respected leaders who deliberated over day-to-day matters affecting the tribe, including such actions as moving the village and determining the start of the annual buffalo hunt, and the assorted soldier societies whose chiefs promoted tribal discipline besides monitoring hunts, overseeing ceremonies, and providing military leadership against enemies. Each of the ten bands normally designated four chiefs among the chiefs' council, while the remainder comprised four old man chiefs who had previously served with distinction on the council. As band dispersement increased during the mid-nineteenth century, these leaders made decisions for the band that had previously been made by the full chiefs' council on behalf of the entire tribe.

During the early years of the nineteenth century, growing trade prospects connected with the Santa Fe Trail attracted some of the Cheyennes to the area of the Arkansas River Valley. One

band, the Hevatanuis, moved south from the Black Hills, while the others, including the Suhtai-related Cheyennes, stayed in the north, effectually creating two tribes--the Southern Cheyennes and the Northern Cheyennes--that nonetheless maintained familial, interband, and religious associations while evolving separate and distinct identities. By then, too, a third group consisting of the Dog Soldiers--sort of a hybrid military society that had evolved and expanded to include not only Cheyennes but Lakotas, as well--came to occupy a zone midway between the northern and southern tribesmen. Thereafter, the northern bands took up residence in the area of north-central present Wyoming, in the Powder River drainage, and cemented enduring relationships with the Teton Lakotas and Northern Arapahos and factored significantly in contests with other tribes and with the Euro-Americans from the middle of the nineteenth century forward. By the 1830s and 1840s, the Southern Cheyennes, including the Dog Soldiers, had become a dominant force on the southern plains, horse-riding buffalo hunters with an acquired warrior complex that challenged the territorial presence of other tribes who had arrived under similar circumstances between the South Platte and Arkansas rivers. In particular, the Cheyennes developed a bitter enmity with the Pawnees, on the eastern periphery of the plains, and conducted almost continuous warfare with the Utes on the west and the Kiowas, Comanches, and Kiowa-Apaches on the south. In 1840, the Southern Cheyennes and Southern Arapahos (who had also separated from their northern kin) and the latter groups reached an accord promoting peace among them and fostering mutually beneficial trade with white Americans and Mexican traders in horses, guns, furs, manufactured merchandise, and whiskey.[6]

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[6]For Cheyenne history and culture, see Peter J. Powell, *Sweet Medicine: The Continuing Role of the Sacred Arrows, the Sun Dance, and the Sacred Buffalo Hat in Northern Cheyenne History* (2 vols.; Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969); John H. Moore, *The Cheyenne*

During the late 1840s, in the wake of the war between the United States and Mexico, several events occurred to impact the Southern Cheyennes and affect their long term relationship with the United States, whose own expansive interests were beginning to conflict with those of the plains tribes. Perhaps most immediate, in 1849 a cholera epidemic ravaged the plains, decimating tribes and killing as many as one-half of the Southern Cheyennes. One entire band disappeared, its few survivors assimilated into the remaining bands. That disaster coincided with the inception and acceleration of travel west by whites crossing the plains on the overland trails to Oregon and California, a route that cut through the Indians' hunting grounds and created general consternation among them. In 1851, the United States government, intent on restricting the tribes from areas of major emigrant traffic and settlement, opened negotiations at Fort Laramie, in present southeastern Wyoming, to gain the Indians' compliance. The treaty negotiated there between several of the plains peoples and representatives of the federal government acknowledged existing tracts for each tribe. For the Cheyennes, that area encompassed the region between the upper North Platte River and the Arkansas, essentially the lands comprising southeastern Wyoming and most of eastern Colorado. Yet many of the

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(Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1996); John H. Moore, *The Cheyenne Nation: A Social and Demographic History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987); Donald J. Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963); George Bird Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians* (2 vols.; New York: Cooper Square, 1923); Peter J. Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain: A History of the Northern Cheyenne Chiefs and Warrior Societies, 1830-1879, with an Epilogue, 1969-1974* (2 vols.; San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981); and John Stands In Timber and Margot Liberty, *Cheyenne Memories* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967). An insightful overview of Northern Cheyenne and Southern Cheyenne history is in Frederick E. Hoxie (ed.), *Encyclopedia of North American Indians: Native American History, Culture, and Life from Paleo-Indians to the Present* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996), pp. 110-14. For the Dog Soldiers, see Jean Afton, David F. Halaas, Andrew E. Masich, and Richard N. Ellis, *Cheyenne Dog Soldiers: A Ledgerbook History of Coups and Combats* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 1997).

promises made to the Indians at Fort Laramie went unfulfilled, and not every band (or individual) of every signatory tribe honored the protocols, realities that brought longstanding confusion and continued distrust on both sides. Meanwhile, the Cheyennes, Arapahos, and other tribes began asserting their presumed rights to what they believed to be their lands. Eventually, government troops arrived to protect American citizens, and trouble soon flared. In the north, difficulties between the army and the Cheyennes arose in the 1850s, particularly during and following the arrival of troops to punish Sioux tribesmen for disrupting citizen travel on the overland trails. At Blue Water Creek in 1855, troops attacked camps of Lakotas and Northern Cheyennes in southwest Nebraska, delivering them a disheartening blow and killing as many as eighty-five tribesmen. Exacerbating distrust and mutual enmity, the encounter was one of several signal episodes that came to characterize relations between the federal government and both the Northern and Southern Cheyennes for the remainder of the century.[7]

It was only a matter of time before the warfare with white soldiers directly impacted the Southern Cheyennes and their Southern Arapaho allies. By the late 1850s, these peoples ranged across present Kansas and eastern Colorado as they pursued their hunting and warring routine with surrounding tribes, generally ignoring the growing inroads by whites into those lands. Although in 1857 the Southern Cheyennes experienced an encounter with the soldiers at Solomon's Fork, Kansas, their subsequent attitude toward whites largely remained one of

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[7]Hoxie, *Encyclopedia of North American Indians*, p. 113; Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1998), pp. 88-89; Charles J. Kappler (comp., ed.), *Indian Affairs. Laws and Treaties* (2 vols.; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), II (treaties), p. 595; Robert M. Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue: The United States Army and the Indian, 1848-1865* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), pp. 113-17.

tolerance and avoidance. But besides disease and the ever-present military threat by the U.S. Government, other matters respecting the presence of whites in their midst directly affected the Southern Cheyennes and other tribes in the area. One was the vast river of humanity that was cutting a swath through their lands--an unceasing advance of whites and animals that between 1841 and 1859 totaled more than 300,000 people and probably more than 1,500,000 oxen, horses, cattle, and sheep, all leaving well-worn marks on the environment. Along the Platte and Arkansas, the principal arteries of the westward march, grasses were consumed, while scarce timber was felled and burned from these streams and adjoining parts of their tributaries. Directly tied to this was the growing competition for game among the plains tribes, now more often pressed by the massive emigration and thus accentuated by competition from whites passing through the country, a factor that constricted food resources for the native peoples. Complicating this, a series of searing droughts struck the region between the 1840s and 1860s drying up water sources and stunting or destroying grasses on which the Cheyennes' horses--and much of their consequent life ways--depended. Moreover, the numbers of buffalo began to decline possibly because of introduced diseases and over hunting, but also likely due to the cumulative impacts of the droughts. The dearth in supply of--and competition over--the beast on which so many native societies depended for food, shelter, and trade created longstanding hardship and exacerbated the other issues that together threatened the rudiments of the culture that had once seemed so alluring.[8] The outgrowth of all this was contention borne of cultural trauma, an instilled resentment motivating behavior ultimately directed against the perceived

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[8]West, *Contested Plains*, pp. 88-91. The Solomon's Fork encounter is explicated in William Y. Chalfant, *Cheyennes and Horse Soldiers: The 1857 Expedition and the Battle of Solomon's Fork* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989).

perpetrators of the dilemma. In 1849, an Indian superintendent who realized the problem wrote that tribal depredations were meant "as a retaliation for the destruction of their buffalo, timber, grass, &c, caused by the vast numbers of whites passing through their country without their consent."[9] Among the Cheyennes, reprisal was most steadfastly pronounced within the Dog Soldiers' band, which increasingly lost no opportunity to resist the Euro-Americans' westward thrust, but was manifest among elements of the other northern and southern bands, as well.

The discovery of gold in 1859 along the South Platte River in present Colorado (then part of Kansas Territory) only aggravated these conditions. During the resulting rush to the Rockies, and despite the passage of great numbers of whites into and through Kansas Territory, most of the Cheyennes and Arapahos continued their peaceable disposition. Factions headed by noted proponents for peace, like chiefs Black Kettle and White Antelope among the Cheyennes, and Little Raven among the Arapahos, sought to maintain that status. But the unrestricted emigration, together with the movement and settlement of whites throughout Kansas and eastern Colorado, mainly along the Platte and Arkansas valleys, but also along those of the Republican and Smoky Hill rivers, eventually led government authorities to impose new strictures on the Indians who also inhabited the region. In 1861, Black Kettle, White Antelope, and Little Raven, among others, signed the Treaty of Fort Wise, an accord that surrendered to the whites almost all of the lands recognized for the Cheyennes and Arapahos ten years earlier in the Treaty of Fort Laramie. The Indians received a triangular-shaped tract adjoining the north side of the Arkansas River in eastern Colorado, where they would henceforth receive annuities from the federal

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[9]D.D. Mitchell to Orland Brown, in *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1849-50* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1850), p. 132, quoted in West, *Contested Plains*, p. 92.

government and learn the rudiments of farming. Yet the document did not represent the views of all Cheyennes and Arapahos domiciled in the Platte country, and those chiefs who touched pen to the treaty attracted lingering indignation from the Dog Soldiers and other Cheyenne bands bent upon resisting the land grab. Many of these affected tribesmen, notably the Dog Soldiers who disavowed the actions of the peace chiefs in agreeing to any such territorially limiting arrangement, remained in the buffalo country practicing their age-old vocation and refused to be bound by the treaty constraints. Likewise, the Kiowas and Comanches further south also rejected the treaty provisions.[10]

The provision of the Fort Wise treaty consigning the Indians to a particular tract of land presently coincided with the intention of the governor of the newly created Colorado Territory to gain total compliance from the Cheyennes and Arapahos, the principal tribes inhabiting his region. The Civil War had erupted in 1861, and Governor John Evans and other territorial officials fretted over possible secessionist tendencies among Colorado's population as well as the likelihood of Confederate influences in the surrounding territories spilling over to disrupt the territory's relations with its native occupants. Evans and others feared that the tribes might be enticed into a Confederate design to cut communications between east and west by seizing the forts in the Platte and Arkansas valleys. Moreover, in 1862 an outbreak of Sioux in Minnesota had caused consternation among citizens on the plains and, however unfounded, promoted in Colorado an atmosphere of apprehension and suspicion against the Indians. During 1862 and

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[10]Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 148-52; West, *Contested Plains*, pp. 281-82; George Bird Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915), p. 120; Stan Hoig, *The Sand Creek Massacre* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), pp. 12-17.

1863, however, most area depredations by Indians involved not the Cheyennes, but Shoshonis and Utes who repeatedly raided the emigrant paths and mail routes in southeastern Wyoming. During the latter year, these activities produced campaigns by volunteer troops from Kansas and California that climaxed with the massacre of a large body of Shoshoni tribesmen at Bear River, in present Idaho, by a command under Colonel Patrick E. Connor. On the plains east of the Rockies, troubles with Indians became mostly confined to bands of Kiowas, Kiowa-Apaches, Arapahos, and Comanches bent upon attacking and stealing from wagon trains passing along the Santa Fe Trail. Elsewhere on the plains, traditional intertribal conflicts continued as in years past, all with little impact on white settlement in the region.[11]

Other circumstances also influenced Governor Evans's determination to rid the Colorado plains of Indians. He was an ambitious visionary, committed to clearing the country so that travel and settlement might proceed uninterrupted and with safety. Evans also wanted the transcontinental railroad to reach Denver, the territorial capital, and needed the Indians removed so that the project might go forward unimpeded. By concentrating the tribesmen on the Upper Arkansas Reservation, as specified in the Fort Wise treaty, Evans believed that they might be better controlled and thus kept far removed from the arteries frequented by settlers and miners. Hoping to convince the Cheyennes and Arapahos to accede to these plans, Evans invited the tribal leadership to attend a council on the plains east of Denver in September 1863. But neither tribe was interested and no Indians appeared. Most of them regarded the treaty as a fraud and refused to move to the designated tract. They believed that the appointed land held few bison,

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[11]Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, pp. 281-83; Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., *The Civil War in the American West* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), pp. 292-94; West, *Contested Plains*, pp. 286-87.

whereas the plains of Kansas still harbored large herds. The chance killing of a Cheyenne man at Fort Larned, Kansas, also inclined the Indians against further negotiations. Evans saw the rebuff as a signal that the tribes were preparing for war, and he used it in correspondence with federal authorities to fuel this perception. It is possible that the governor lobbied this viewpoint in order to instigate a situation allowing him to forcibly remove the Indians from all settled parts of his territory.[12]

The evolving scenario between Evans and the Southern Cheyennes and Arapahos would culminate in the Sand Creek Massacre--an event of calamitous proportion for the peoples' societies at the moment and which would factor significantly in the Cheyennes' immediate future. Governor Evans's accomplice in the unfolding events was a former Methodist minister, Colonel John M. Chivington, an officer who had won several important victories over Confederate troops at Apache Canyon and Glorieta Pass in New Mexico. Chivington commanded the Military District of Colorado within the Department of the Missouri, whose commanders were often engrossed with operations elsewhere, leaving him free to follow his military and political opportunities on the frontier. A reorganization of the military hierarchy in January 1864 placed Chivington's district under Major General Samuel R. Curtis's Department of Kansas, a jurisdiction that remained involved in campaigns in the Indian Territory and eastern Kansas, leaving Chivington on his own. As the war in the East drew more territorial troops away from Colorado, Evans asked for their return and lobbied for regulars to patrol critical supply and

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[12]Gary L. Roberts, "Sand Creek: Tragedy and Symbol" (unpublished doctoral dissertation dated 1984, University of Oklahoma, Norman), pp. 76-108; Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, p. 284; Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, pp. 121-29; Josephy, *Civil War in the American West*, pp. 295, 297-98; Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 155, 158-61, 166-69.

communications routes along the Platte and Arkansas. Washington authorities rejected these entreaties owing to then-current manpower deficits.[13]

In point of fact, despite the transgressions of a few, evidence suggests that the Cheyennes believed themselves to be at peace during this period. Yet Colonel Chivington supported Evans's contrary view and likely sought a pretext for promoting it. In the spring of 1864, after straying livestock turned up in the possession of Dog Soldiers, Chivington interpreted it as a provocation and issued instructions to "kill Cheyennes wherever and whenever found." Troops of the First Colorado Cavalry clashed with the Dog Soldiers at Fremont's Orchard along the South Platte, and during ensuing months the soldiers attacked other Cheyenne camps, in one case killing the peace chief, Starving Bear, who had previously met President Abraham Lincoln in the nation's capital. In response, parties of Cheyennes struck back in a series of raids between Forts Riley and Larned in Kansas, but abstained from igniting a major frontier war. In an effort to forestall further trouble, General Curtis's inspector general advised against further Chivington-like forays and urged conciliation with the Cheyennes and protection of the travel routes. He protested that the Colorado troops did "not know one tribe from another and . . . will kill anything in the shape of an Indian."

By then such opinions no longer mattered. After more Cheyenne people were murdered, the Indians increased their marauding and their villages soon contained large amounts of stolen property. Other tribes became involved in the raiding, to include Arapahos, Kiowas, and Lakotas, often without the approval of their leaders, and attacks against white enterprises along

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[13]Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, pp. 284-85; Josephy, *Civil War in the American West*, p. 299.

the trails bordering the Platte, Smoky Hill, and Arkansas rivers in Nebraska and Kansas became common. In Colorado, the members of one entire white family, the Hungates, were found murdered, and the public exhibition of their corpses brought outrage and fear, causing citizens in outlying areas to find refuge in Denver. In a hysteric message to the War Department, Governor Evans called for 10,000 troops, complaining that unless they were immediately forthcoming "we will be cut off and destroyed." While the Cheyennes received immediate blame for the Hungate murders, Arapahos later admitted the deeds.[14]

In July and August, 1864, General Curtis responded to the growing crisis by sending columns of soldiers to range through the country north, south, and west of Fort Larned, Kansas. The campaign yielded meager results, but succeeded in opening the traffic route west along the Arkansas because of increased numbers of troops at the Kansas and Colorado garrisons. Curtis next increased his control over the area by creating a single command, the District of the Upper Arkansas, overseen by Major General James G. Blunt, to replace those previously monitoring the Indian situation. Similar administrative changes were made in Nebraska. When Cheyennes in that territory attacked settlers on the Little Blue River, killing fifteen and carrying off others, Curtis mounted a strong campaign of Nebraska and Kansas troops to search through western Kansas, but the soldiers found no Indians. Similarly, in September General Blunt headed an expedition out of Fort Larned that presently traveled north after Cheyennes reported in the area. On the 25th, two companies of Colorado troops under Major Scott J. Anthony found a large

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[14]Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, pp. 285-87; Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 176-91; Hoig, *The Sand Creek Massacre*, pp. 36-90; West, *Contested Plains*, pp. 289-91; Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, pp. 131-42. Quotes are from Josephy, *Civil War in the American West*, pp. 300, 303.

village of Cheyennes and Arapahos on Walnut Creek and engaged them, with Blunt arriving in support. Blunt's command followed the tribesmen for two days before withdrawing from the field.[15]

Soon after these operations, a sudden Confederate incursion into Missouri drew the attention of Blunt and Curtis away from the Indian situation. The distraction allowed Colonel Chivington to step forward at a time when the tribes began abating the warfare to meet the onset of winter. Buffalo hunting to insure meat for the months ahead now became of primary importance to the tribesmen, and leaders like Black Kettle, previously inclined toward peace, regained their influence. Black Kettle learned of a proclamation issued by Governor Evans urging the "Friendly Indians of the Plains" to segregate themselves from the warring bands and to locate their villages near army posts to secure protection. Those people who did not so align themselves would be considered hostile. Late in August, the chief contacted Major Edward W. Wynkoop, commanding at Fort Lyon on the Arkansas near present Lamar, Colorado, of his desire for peace. In response, Wynkoop led his First Colorado Cavalry troops to meet Black Kettle and the Arapaho chief, Left Hand, near Fort Wallace, Kansas, at the big timbers of the Smoky Hill River. There the Indians surrendered several captive whites, reportedly received from other bands, and agreed to meet with Evans and Chivington to reach an accord. Then Black Kettle and the other leaders followed Wynkoop back to Fort Lyon.

When Black Kettle and six headmen arrived in Denver, the city was in a turmoil because

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[15]Hoig, *The Sand Creek Massacre*, pp. 91-97; Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, pp. 287-89; Josephy, *Civil War in the American West*, pp. 301-04; Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 193-208; Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, pp. 155-58. For a participant's view of these broad operations, see Eugene F. Ware, *The Indian War of 1864* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1960).

of the conditions wrought by the Indian conflict. The warfare had halted incoming provisions of food and goods, and citizens were still shaken by the Hungate murders. In August, Evans had published another proclamation contradicting his earlier one, now calling upon citizens to kill all Indians and seize their property, effectually extending an invitation for wholesale bloodshed and thievery. Evans had meantime received permission from federal officials to raise a regiment of 100-day United States volunteers, to be designated the Third Colorado Cavalry, and Chivington was preparing it for field service. All of these developments made Evans's earlier pronouncements ring hollow, especially with so many of the territory's citizens calling for vengeance. Further, the governor needed to legitimize with Washington authorities his earlier predictions of war and settle questions concerning the status of Indian lands in Colorado. And if the Indians went unpunished, Evans reasoned that they would be encouraged to renew the warfare next year.[16]

At the council at Camp Weld near Denver on September 28, 1864, Evans spoke evasively to the chiefs, informing Black Kettle that, although his people might still separate themselves from their warring kin, they must make their peace with the military authorities, in essence turning the situation over to Chivington. Anxious for peace, Black Kettle and his entourage acceded to all conditions and Chivington told them that they could report to Fort Lyon once they had laid down their arms. But the Camp Weld meeting was fraught with "deadly ambiguities." The Indians departed the proceedings convinced that since they had already been to the post they had made peace, although neither Evans nor Chivington admitted that such was the case.

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[16]Hoig, *Sand Creek Massacre*, pp. 28-107; Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, pp. 290-91; Josephy, *Civil War in the American West*, pp. 305-06; West, *Contested Plains*, p. 291; Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, pp. 152-53.

Further, a telegram from General Curtis admonished that "I want no peace until the Indians suffer more . . . [and only upon] my directions." Evans notified Washington authorities of the continued hostility of the tribesmen and of the need to deal with them by force of arms, noting that "the winter . . . is the most favorable time for their chastisement." Yet, in consequence of the Camp Weld meeting, Black Kettle prepared his people to accept the conditions and surrender themselves prisoners of war.[17]

First to arrive in late October at Fort Lyon were 113 lodges of Arapahos under Little Raven and Left Hand. Because as prisoners the Arapahos could not hunt, Major Wynkoop issued rations to the destitute people while assuring them of their safety. But Wynkoop's action directly countered General Curtis's policy of punishing the tribes, and when word of his charity reached district headquarters at Fort Riley tempers flared. Wynkoop was summarily called there to explain his actions. At Fort Lyon, Major Anthony, of Chivington's First Colorado Cavalry, replaced him. On arrival at Fort Lyon in early November, Anthony refused the Arapahos further provisions and temporarily disarmed them. When Black Kettle reached the fort he reported that his lodges were pitched some forty miles away on Sand Creek, a location that Anthony approved because he had no rations to feed the Cheyennes. The major told them that he was seeking authority to feed them at Fort Lyon. Major Wynkoop, who the Indians trusted, had given them assurances of Anthony's integrity, and the Cheyenne leaders had accepted these conditions prior to Wynkoop's departure from Fort Lyon on November 26. Advised to join Black Kettle's people

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[17]Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 210-13; Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, p. 291; Hoig, *The Sand Creek Massacre*, pp. 110-28; Josephy, *Civil War in the American West*, pp. 306-07. (Quotes are in ibid., p. 307); West, *Contested Plains*, p. 295; Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, pp. 153-54.

on Sand Creek, only the Arapaho leader, Left Hand, complied and started his few lodges in that direction; Little Raven took his followers far away down the Arkansas.

While all of this proceeded, Colonel Chivington orchestrated events in Denver that would climax in the confrontation with the Cheyennes and Arapahos on Sand Creek. Following a failed statehood vote, in which he was defeated as a candidate for Congress, Chivington directed his efforts to readying the new regiment, locally castigated as the "Bloodless Third" because its members had yet to kill a single Indian, and which was soon to close out its 100-day enlistment. Composed of but partly trained officers and undisciplined men from the local community, the Third Colorado Cavalry had been organized by Colonel George L. Shoup, who had previously served under Chivington. Earlier that fall, Chivington had envisioned attacking bands of Cheyennes reported in the Republican River country, but by November (and perhaps secretly all along) he targeted Black Kettle and his people; his every movement appeared calculated to that end, for the tribesmen technically were not at peace and were awaiting Curtis's consent before moving to Fort Lyon. In October, in this tense atmosphere, Colonel Chivington armed his command and, with Shoup commanding the regiment, started companies south to assemble at Bijou Basin, sixty miles southeast of Denver.[18]

On November 14, Chivington himself marched out of Denver with companies of the Third and First Colorado Cavalry regiments headed toward the Arkansas River. The weather turned foul, and the movement was beset with drifting snows that delayed units from rendezvousing at Camp Fillmore, near Pueblo. On the 23rd, Chivington inspected the united

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[18]Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, pp. 292-93; Hoig, *The Sand Creek Massacre*, pp. 129-32; Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 214-15; West, *Contested Plains*, pp. 297-98; Josephy, *Civil War in the American West*, pp. 307-08.

command, then all proceeded east along the Arkansas. The troops reached Fort Lyon at midday, November 28. Chivington had traveled quickly and quietly and his appearance surprised the garrison. To secure knowledge of his presence and movements, the colonel placed a cordon of pickets around the fort and refused to allow anyone to leave. At Fort Lyon, Major Anthony greeted Chivington and, apprised of his mission to find and destroy Black Kettle's camp as prelude to striking the Smoky Hill villages, gave his wholehearted support to the extent of providing additional troops and offering guidance to the village. Some officers protested that Black Kettle's people were *de facto* prisoners of the government, awaiting only General Curtis's permission before they should arrive at the post, and that to strike them would violate promises made earlier by Wynkoop as well as by Anthony. Chivington responded that it was "right and honorable to use any means under God's heaven to kill Indians that would kill women and children, and 'damn any man that was in sympathy with Indians'. . . ."[19]

At around 8 p.m. on the 28th, Chivington led his column out of Fort Lyon paralleling an old Indian trail that headed northeast. Scarcely any snow lay on the ground. His command consisted of Shoup's Third Colorado Cavalry and about one-half of the First Colorado Cavalry divided under Major Anthony and First Lieutenant Luther Wilson, in all about 700 men bundled in heavy overcoats. Mules pulled along four howitzers and their ammunition and equipment. Some thirty-seven miles away on the northeast side of Sand Creek stood Black Kettle's village of approximately 100 lodges housing about 500 people. Other Cheyenne leaders in the camp were

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[19]Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, pp. 293-94. (Quote is from testimony of Lieutenant Joseph A. Cramer, cited in ibid., p. 294); Hoig, *The Sand Creek Massacre*, pp. 135-43; Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, pp. 159-62. Discussion of the status of Black Kettle's people prior to Chivington's attack on them is in West, *Contested Plains*, pp. 298-300.

Sand Hill, White Antelope, Bear Tongue, One Eye, and War Bonnet, and the few tipis of Arapahos with Left Hand stood a short distance downstream. Although some men were present, many had gone hunting, leaving mostly women, children, and the elderly in the village. Through the night of November 28-29, all were oblivious to the closing proximity of the soldiers.[20]

Chivington's force kept a lively pace through the cold, moonless night, so that the first streaks of dawn on November 29 revealed the white tipis of the Cheyennes a few miles off to the northwest. Advancing closer, the soldiers gained a ridge overlooking Sand Creek from which they could clearly discern the camp. Pony herds ranged on either side of the stream, and Chivington dispatched units to capture and corral the animals before the Indians might use them. As the tribesmen slowly awakened, the troops descended into the dry stream bed and moved north along it with the howitzers in tow. Units of the First Colorado rode forward and took position at the east end of the camp. Nearby, Chivington halted the men of the Third Colorado so that they could remove their overcoats and other luggage. He exhorted them at the prospect before them, then sent them forward toward the camp, whose occupants had gradually become aroused at the noise of the approaching threat. Nearing the lower end of the village, the soldiers deployed their force and opened fire on the tipis. As the startled Indians ran out of their homes, howitzers hurled exploding shells that turned the people away to congregate near the westernmost lodges while their leaders tried to communicate with the attackers. Then shooting erupted everywhere. The leader White Antelope ran forward, arms raised and waving for

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[20]The locations of the Cheyenne camp components are laid out according to George Bent in George E. Hyde, *Life of George Bent written from His Letters*. Ed. by Savoie Lottinville (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), p. 149. See also, Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, I, pp. 299-300.

attention, but a soldier bullet cut him down. Black Kettle, proponent for peace and guardian of his people, reportedly raised an American flag and a white flag on a pole near his lodge to announce his status, but it was ignored in the heat of the onslaught.

Chivington's command continued the small arms fire from positions northeast and southeast of the camp. Caught in a cross fire, the warriors responded by attempting to shield the women, children, and elderly who ran to the back of the lodges. Most of the howitzer rounds fell short of their mark, although some burst over the village. As the soldiers advanced on horseback along either side of the creek, they kept up their shooting, and those on the north bank of the stream passed through the fringe of the camp. The mass of people began to flee in all directions for safety. Many ran into and up the creek bottom, which appeared to afford a natural protective corridor leading away from the assault. Riding on either side of the Indians, however, the cavalry troops indiscriminately fired hundreds of rounds into the fleeing tribesmen, and began to inflict large numbers of casualties among them. Meantime, other Indians bolting the village at the opening of the attack had managed to obtain horses and were running generally north and southwest over the open terrain as they tried to elude squads of pursuing cavalrymen. Many of them were chased down and killed by the flying troops.

But it was the mass of people in the stream bed that drew the attention of most of the soldiers. As they reached a point variously estimated to be from 200 yards to one-half mile above the village, these people--composed mostly of noncombatants--sought to find shelter in hastily dug pits and trenches in the creek bed, most excavated by hand at the base of the dry stream banks. The Sand Creek bottom was several hundred yards wide at this point, and the people sought shelter along either bank, digging hiding places and throwing the sand and dirt

outward to form protective barriers. Having pursued the Cheyennes and Arapahos to this location, the troops dismounted on either side of the stream and approached cautiously. Some began firing at Indians sheltered in the pits beneath the opposite banks, while others crawled forward and discharged their weapons blindly over the top of the bank. Thus trapped, the people fought back desperately with what few weapons they possessed. Shortly, however, the howitzers arrived from downstream, took positions on either side of the Sand Creek bottom, and began delivering exploding shell into the pits. This bombardment, coupled with the steady fire of the cavalry small arms, was too much for the people, and by the time the affair was over at around 2 p.m., at least 150 Cheyennes and Arapahos lay dead, most of them killed during the slaughter in the defensive pits above the village or in the stream bed as they ran from the camp to elude the soldiers. Chivington lost ten men killed and thirty-eight wounded in the encounter. Throughout the balance of the day, parties of cavalrymen roamed the area for miles around finishing off any survivors they could find. That night, nonetheless, many of those wounded during the carnage managed to get away from the pits and join other village escapees who, over the next several days, journeyed northeast to the Cheyenne camps along the Smoky Hill River. Surprisingly, despite the suddenness and ferocity of the Sand Creek assault, the majority of villagers, including many who were severely wounded, somehow escaped the soldiers and survived.

Those who did not survive became the objects of widespread mutilation at the hands of the soldiers, particularly of members of the "Bloodless Third." Over the next day, these largely untrained and undisciplined troops, including some officers, roamed the site of the destruction scalping and otherwise desecrating the dead, thereby compounding the basic butchery of the event. The soldiers then plundered and burned the village and destroyed its contents. The

captured pony herd traveled south with Chivington as he continued his campaign, and the dead and wounded soldiers were removed to Fort Lyon. Chivington had earlier planned to mete similar treatment upon the Smoky Hill assemblage, but instead turned toward the Arapaho village that Major Anthony had earlier sent away from Fort Lyon. These tribesmen had fled by the time the troops reached the mouth of the Arkansas River. The Third Colorado then moved upstream to Fort Lyon before heading back to Denver, where they were greeted on December 22 by a throng of cheering citizens ecstatic over the "victory" of Sand Creek. Scalps from the Indian victims were ceremoniously exhibited at a local theater as the soldiers recounted their participation. As if the true number of deaths were not enough, Chivington boasted of having killed between 500 and 600 Indians in his attack.[21]

In the aftermath of Sand Creek, as word gradually spread about the brutality of the onslaught, questions arose about Chivington's version of events. The truth shocked and sickened most Americans. In 1865, Sand Creek became the focus of three federal investigations, one military and the others congressional, looking into justification for the action. Senator James R. Doolittle (R-Wisc.), chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, directed an inquiry following receipt of information about the event that "made one's blood chill and freeze with horror." In the West, General Curtis was ordered to find out what had occurred at Sand Creek.

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[21]This account of Sand Creek is based upon information in Roberts, "Sand Creek," pp. 421-41; Hoig, *The Sand Creek Massacre*, pp. 145-62; Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, pp. 295-96; Josephy, *Civil War in the American West*, pp. 308-11; Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, I, 301-09; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, pp. 151-56; Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, pp. Pp. 163-73; and Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 217-22. Chivington's figure is in his report of December 16, 1864, in *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (73 vols., 128 parts; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series I, Vol. XLI, Part I, 949.

The examinations resolved that Chivington and his troops had conducted a premeditated campaign that resulted in the needless massacre of the Cheyennes and Arapahos, and that the atrocities that followed were an abject disgrace. By then, however, the colonel and his men were out of the service and could not be prosecuted for their actions, and only Chivington's political future suffered. The Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War concluded in its assessment of Chivington that "he deliberately planned and executed a foul and dastardly massacre which would have disgraced the veriest savage among those who were the victims of his cruelty." The committee also resolved that Governor Evans "was fully aware that the Indians massacred so brutally at Sand Creek, were then, and had been, actuated by the most friendly feelings towards the whites. . . ." Ultimately, Evans paid the price for his involvement in events preliminary to the massacre and was dismissed as governor.[22]

The Sand Creek Massacre devastated the Cheyennes. In the lives lost, both they and the Arapahos experienced familial and societal disruptions that have since spanned the generations of their societies. But the event most directly carried catastrophic physical, social, political, and material consequences among the relatively small (ca. 3,000) Cheyenne population, and

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[22]Josephy, *Civil War in the American West*, pp. 311-12 (including first quote); Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, pp. 297 (second quote), 309; Hoig, *The Sand Creek Massacre*, pp. 163-76 (including third quote, p. 166); Roberts, "Sand Creek," pp. 479-521. The three published products of these investigations are: U.S. Senate, 38 Cong., 2 sess. *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, Massacre of the Cheyenne Indians*. Report No. 142 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1865); U.S. Senate, 39 Cong., 2 sess., *Report of the Joint Special Committee. Condition of the Indian Tribes with Appendix (The Chivington Massacre)*. Report No. 156 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1867); and U.S. Senate. 39 Cong., 2 sess. *Report of the Secretary of War, Communicating . . . a Copy of the Evidence Taken at Denver and Fort Lyon, Colorado Territory by a Military Commission Ordered to Inquire into the Sand Creek Massacre, November 29, 1864*. Executive Document No. 26 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1867). (Hereafter cited as *Sand Creek Massacre*.)

indisputably changed the course of their tribal history forever. Beyond the basic human loss, the deaths of numerous chiefs in the massacre, occurring at a time when the Cheyennes were already experiencing fragmentation in their system with the evolution of the Dog Soldier Band, ultimately had long-range influences on the structural bonds within Cheyenne society. The Council of Forty-four, the central entity of Cheyenne government, was ravaged with the losses of White Antelope, One Eye, Yellow Wolf, Big Man, Bear Man, War Bonnet, Spotted Crow, Bear Robe, and Little Robe, besides those of the headmen of three warrior societies. In addition, the losses in material fixtures, including homes, clothing, furnishings, and even artwork during the destruction of Black Kettle's village were immense, with immediate and future impacts within the tribal community.[23]

For the Southern Cheyennes as a people, the sheer totality of the strike at Sand Creek disrupted the cultural and social fabric of the tribe. Although the people had experienced devastation before, notably in the loss of an entire band during the cholera epidemic of the 1840s, they had never endured such a sudden and complete disaster affecting elements of tribal infrastructure--people, government, economy, and material culture--which would so directly impact its future. The event forecasted generations of recovery before the Cheyennes might regain a semblance of their diverse pre-Sand Creek Massacre leadership. Yet spiritually, the inner strength of the people and their usual reliance on transcendent forces enabled them to get past the calamity and carry on. For the Cheyennes, the true cost of Sand Creek lay in human terms, not ethereal ones.

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[23]Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, I, 309-10; Roberts, "Sand Creek," pp. 684-91.

Chapter Two: War or Peace

A major result of the Sand Creek Massacre was its effect on the course of Indian-white relations, notably the implementation of federal Indian policy over ensuing decades. Although largely instigated independently by federalized territorial forces operating under the license of Colorado authorities, the event and its aftermath produced an atmosphere of pervasive and nervous distrust between the federal government--principally the army, as the instrument of national policy--and the plains tribes that complicated their associations and compounded negotiations on virtually every matter. In a single cataclysmic strike, the Colorado troops had eliminated most of the Southern Cheyenne chiefs who had favored peace. News of the treachery spread among the tribes like wildfire. As one official warned of an upcoming meeting with Indians when troops might be operating in the vicinity, "An angel from Heaven would not convince them but what another 'Chivington Massacre' was intended." The months following Sand Creek witnessed an eruption of warfare throughout the central plains, with Cheyenne, Lakota, and Arapaho warriors striking the emigration routes along the North Platte, South Platte, Republican, and Arkansas valleys. In the north, Sand Creek added further fuel to the invasion of Indian lands already underway there via the Bozeman Trail, producing several army expeditions against the tribes, as well as an unsuccessful attempt to militarily occupy the region. On the southern plains, troops attempted to subdue the tribes and overawe them with similar campaigns. In 1865, 1867, and 1868, tenuous treaties arranged between the government and the plains Indians sought to isolate them on designated tracts removed from the principal arteries westward, but peace remained elusive, and the conflicts of the late 1860s and 1870s throughout the northern

and southern plains frontier could trace their origins at least partly to the Sand Creek Massacre and its long-term unsettling effects among the Cheyenne people.[1]

George Bent, the mixed-blood Cheyenne who was in Black Kettle's village at Sand Creek, years later gave the most thorough statement of the overall casualties within the various bands involved in the massacre:

> The camp was divided up into several groups of lodges, each band camped with its own chief. The people in each camp all belonged to the same clan [band]. Of these clans, Black Kettle's (the Wutapiu [or Wotapio] Clan) was the heaviest loser. Very few men of this clan escaped. Chief Sand Hill's band (the Heviqsnipahis Clan) had few killed; this band was camped farther down the creek than any of the others and most the people escaped before the soldiers could reach their camp. Yellow Wolf's band (Hevhaitaniu [Hevaitaneo] Clan) lost half its people killed, including the old chief, Yellow Wolf, who was then eighty-five years old, and his brother Big Man. War Bonnet's band (Oivimana Clan) lost half its people. The Ridge Men, Chief White Antelope (Hisiometanio [Hisiometaneo] or Ridge Men Clan) lost very heavily also. Chief One Eye was killed together with many of his band, and the Suhtai [Sutaio] Clan lost a few people, but not very many. The Masikota Clan and the Dog Soldiers, together with some other small Cheyenne bands, were not present. Left Hand was also with us, with ten

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[1]For these events, see Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, pp. 300-40, and Roberts, "Sand Creek," pp. 523-66, 686. The quote is from Indian Agent Jesse H. Leavenworth to Brevet Major General John B. Sanborn, August 1, 1865. National Archives, Record Group 393, Part III, Entry 769, Volume 2, p. 171.

lodges of Arapahos--say fifty or sixty people; and of these only four or five escaped with their lives.[2]

Following the massacre, the survivors of Sand Creek--perhaps as many as 350 people--made their way northeast, joining other Cheyennes in the Smoky Hill River country. As indicated by Bent, of all the bands represented in the Sand Creek village, that of which Black Kettle was principal chief, the Wotapios, suffered the most loss. It had been at the core of the peace faction of the Cheyennes, the part of the tribe composed largely of followers of the council chiefs who had favored trade and compromise with the whites, and the massacre only compounded an evolving alienation between these people and the ascendent Dog Soldiers--the composite militaristic band of Cheyennes and Lakotas that had evolved since the 1830s and came to occupy the headwaters country of the Republican and Smoky Hill rivers between the Platte and the Arkansas. By the 1860s, the Dog Soldiers--as well as the military societies existing within the various traditional Cheyenne bands--had accrued such great influence that their primary motivation, raiding and plunder, countered the influence of the peace advocates as represented by the traditional council chiefs. The Treaty of Fort Wise of 1861, by which the Cheyenne signatories had conceded a smaller reservation, incensed the Dog Soldiers, and they exercised certain intimidation over the other bands to renounce it. Even before the Sand Creek tragedy, at the Wynkoop meeting near Fort Wallace in September 1864, at least one of the chiefs, One Eye, had offered to help the soldiers fight the Dog Soldiers.

Despite the earnestness of Black Kettle and the few remaining peace advocates, the Sand Creek Massacre effectually validated the military line as embraced by the Dog Soldiers. What

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[2]Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, pp. 159-62.

happened following Sand Creek was that those smaller marginal Cheyenne camps, neither participants in that event nor followers of any particular philosophy, turned their allegiance to the soldier societies, thus gravitating away from the council chiefs and closer--physically as well as philosophically--to the Dog Soldiers. Together, these people represented the primary core of the Cheyennes' resistance in the wake of Sand Creek and conducted much of the retaliatory raiding that ensued. Even Black Kettle joined the war fever, despite temporarily losing his position to Leg In the Water and Little Robe, son of the chief of the same name killed at Sand Creek. In sum, Sand Creek aggravated a social/political schism already at work in Cheyenne society and what followed represented the crescendo of that reality. Those refusing to participate in these activities consisted mostly of council chiefs (who had earlier favored peace) and their immediate families, estimated at fewer than 450 persons. By late December 1864, the disparate groups of Cheyennes, including the Dog Soldiers, were assembled along the Republican River poised with 2,000 warriors to attack the emigrant trails. In early 1865, the Indians opened their campaign, striking Julesburg in northwestern Colorado Territory and beginning a rampage against stations and settlements up the North Platte. After several weeks, Black Kettle, tiring of the warfare, broke away and led his people south of the Arkansas where they camped with Little Raven's Arapahos and villages of Kiowas and Comanches.[3]

As evidence of the political ascendancy and independence of the Dog Soldiers, as well as of the increasing polarity between them and the council chiefs after Sand Creek, trader John

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[3]This summation of the rise of the Dog Soldiers *vis-a-vis* the tribal establishment is drawn from Moore, *The Cheyenne Nation*, pp. 191-99. See also, Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 224-25, 228. For activities of Cheyenne warriors in attacking white outposts and settlements in the wake of Sand Creek, especially from the Cheyenne perspective, see, Afton, *et al*, *Cheyenne Dog Soldiers.*

Prowers testified at the military inquiry following the massacre that these people had effectually divorced themselves from their kin. "[There exists] difficulty between themselves [Dog Soldiers] and other bands of Cheyennes," said Prowers. "They have drawn off from Black Kettle's band, and refused to have anything to do with him. . . . They do not claim any connection to Black Kettle's band whatever."[4] It is important to recognize the distinction between the Dog Soldiers and post-Sand Creek traditional Cheyenne society because of the course of U.S.-Cheyenne relations after Sand Creek, particularly as they affected events leading to the federal government's prosecution of these people in 1868 that culminated in the engagement at the Washita River.

As mentioned, one of the principal disputes between the traditional Cheyennes and the Dog Soldiers emanated from the former people's signing of the Fort Wise Treaty of 1861. Prior to this, the Cheyennes and Arapahos had acceded to the terms of the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 (although without Dog Soldier concurrence), which formally designated their territory as that lying between the North Platte and Arkansas rivers and from the Rocky Mountains east to embrace southeastern Wyoming, almost all of eastern Colorado, extreme western Kansas, and southwestern Nebraska. It was a vast area, but unfortunately straddled the major emigration routes, and eventually conflicted with plans of Colorado territorial authorities who influenced the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to negotiate a severe constriction of the Cheyennes' land base in 1861. By the Treaty of Fort Wise, the Indians settled for a tract less than one-thirteenth the size of the 1851 reserve between Sand Creek and the Arkansas. It was this convention, adhered to by the peace proponents, including Black Kettle, White Antelope, Lean Bear, and Little Wolf, that

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[4]*Sand Creek Massacre*, pp. 144-45 (as cited in Moore, *The Cheyenne Nation*, p. 200).

so infuriated the Dog Soldiers and peremptorily turned them away from the Cheyenne traditionalists. The Sand Creek Massacre, which took place within the confines of this district, accelerated the division and pointed up to the Dog Soldiers, at least, the folly of their brethren's ways.[5]

As warfare escalated up the North Platte River in 1865, the government sent forth two expeditions, headed respectively by Brigadier General Edward P. Connor and Brigadier General Alfred Sully, to intimidate the Sioux and Cheyennes in what is now Wyoming and Dakota. A series of raids by Indians in Kansas beginning in June, 1865, likewise prompted the commander of the Military Division of the Missouri to direct full-scale military operations against those tribesmen. But within months, mixed signals from Washington, D.C., together with the presence in the region of Senator James R. Doolittle's commission investigating Indian affairs in the wake of Sand Creek, negated the projected campaign. The Indian agent for the District of the Upper Arkansas, Jesse Leavenworth, also worked among his charges to prevent conflict. In response to what happened to the peace advocates at Sand Creek, as well as to attempt to stem the resulting warfare, the federal government finally negotiated with the wronged tribesmen the following year, offering indemnities for their suffering and damages. On October 14, 1865, at the mouth of the Little Arkansas River on the Arkansas, the Cheyenne and Arapaho peace chiefs, respectively headed by Black Kettle and Little Raven, agreed to terms. When Black Kettle told the commissioners that only eighty lodges of his people were present (excluding, of course, the Dog Soldiers and other traditionalist Cheyennes living north of the Platte River), the federal

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[5]The complete texts of these treaties appear in Kappler, *Indian Affairs*, II (Treaties), pp. 594-96; 807-11.

representatives responded that only those people present would be bound by the protocols and that others might assent within five months. Black Kettle's address to the commissioners at the time conveyed some of the duress under which the chief had labored since Sand Creek. In obvious reference to the circumstances preceding the massacre, he said: "Your young soldiers, I don't think they listen to you. You bring presents, and when I come to get them I am afraid they will strike me before I get away. When I come in to receive presents I take them up crying."[6]

The Little Arkansas Treaty defined a new tract for the Southern Cheyennes and Southern Arapahos. Essentially, the boundary included those parts of the present states of Kansas and Oklahoma framed by the Arkansas and Cimarron rivers to a point opposite Buffalo Creek on the Cimarron, where an imaginary line ran north to meet the Arkansas. The Indians relinquished all previous claims to the country lying between the Platte River and the Arkansas, although the commissioners granted them continued residence and hunting rights in "the unsettled portions" of that region pending the extinguishment of other tribes' title to that land and the signatory tribes' removal to the new reserve. As partial redress for the Sand Creek Massacre, each signatory chief was to receive 320 acres within the tract, while each survivor who had lost husbands or parents was to receive 160 acres of land. The government condemned "the gross and wanton outrages" caused by Chivington and his men "while the said Indians were at peace with the United States, and under its flag." Furthermore, for their property losses sustained in the tragedy, the government vowed to compensate the affected tribesmen present at the treaty council "in United States securities, animals, goods, provisions, or . . . other useful articles." Because the

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[6]Quoted in Berthrong, *The Southern* Cheyennes, p. 242. Proceedings of the treaty council appear in *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1865* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1865), pp. 517-27.

Little Arkansas Treaty did not immediately include as participants the Cheyennes still raiding in the area of the Platte River and on north, it served as but a partial panacea to guide future relations between the Cheyennes and their allies and the federal government on the Southern Plains. The treaty was ratified in the United States Senate on May 22, 1866, and proclaimed February 2, 1867.[7]

Meantime, following the largely unsuccessful army campaigns in the north, many of the Cheyennes and Arapahos, perhaps tired of combating the troops or desirous of hunting in their old lands, began moving south. En route, they attacked whites wherever encountered along the Platte and in one instance killed six people along the Smoky Hill River. These Indians had not been part of the Little Arkansas Treaty, in fact they seemingly remained unaware of it or of its provisions despite the requirement that its signatories "use their utmost endeavor to induce that portion of the respective tribes not now present to unite with them and acceed [sic] to the provisions of this treaty." Thomas Murphy, director of the Central Indian Superintendency, believed that army attacks against these people along the Platte had generated the reprisals against white emigrants and settlers. The trader William Bent opined that, while many of those Cheyennes were peaceably disposed, they were hard pressed to counter the influence of the intransigent Dog Soldiers, who were largely responsible for keeping the people from joining their southern kinsmen. Bent suggested that at all costs the Dog Soldiers be kept away from the people with Black Kettle and Little Robe for fear of instigating trouble among them that would threaten the peace established with those Indians. Yet Interior Department officials appointed

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[7]Kappler, *Indian Affairs*, II (Treaties), 887-92; Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 224-44. During the Little Arkansas councils, treaties were also concluded with the Kiowa Apaches, Kiowas, and Comanches. See Kappler, *Indian Affairs*, II (Treaties), pp. 891-95.

Major Edward W. Wynkoop, who the tribesmen had trusted before Sand Creek, to rejoin the disparate elements of the tribe and bring them into accord with the 1865 treaty provisions.[8]

Throughout the winter of 1865-66, the various bands and scattered camps of Cheyennes and Arapahos ranged from the upper Republican River country of Nebraska south to the Cimarron River. Some, apparently disposed to peace, camped with Black Kettle's people below the Arkansas, and there were reports that even some of the Dog Soldiers had indicated a willingness to talk. In February, Special Agent Wynkoop met with Medicine Arrows and Big Head, who were camped with Black Kettle. Both initially spurned Wynkoop's efforts to gain their support of the Little Arkansas Treaty because neither chief wanted to remain below the Arkansas. Wynkoop managed to convince them, however, and they affixed their marks to a document accepting the treaty. Wynkoop's negotiations also resulted in the Indians' freeing a sixteen-year-old girl, Mary Fletcher, who had been captured along the Platte the previous summer. Wynkoop later met with representatives of the Dog Soldiers, who signed a document attesting to their own intended compliance with the treaty terms. Wynkoop reported his success to his superiors, telling them that peace had been attained with all of the Southern Cheyennes, an overstatement of fact, but one he doubtless believed. He urged the government assure the peace by keeping its promises to the people.[9]

As those Indians who subscribed to the Little Arkansas Treaty learned more about its

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[8]Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 256-57. For background on Wynkoop, see Thomas D. Isern, "The Controversial Career of Edward W. Wynkoop," *Colorado Magazine*, 56 (Winter-Spring, 1979), pp. 1-18; and Edward W. Wynkoop, *The Tall Chief: The Unfinished Autobiography of Edward W. Wynkoop, 1856-1866*. Ed. by Christopher B. Gerboth (Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 1993).

[9]Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 259-60.

provisions, they began having misgivings. Many were especially distressed about eventually having to forfeit interest in the Smoky Hill country, prime buffalo territory and their favorite hunting ground. Already the region had been compromised by the presence of a trail along the Smoky Hill to facilitate the whites' westward migration. Indeed, some Dog Soldiers threatened war if forced to leave the area, and whites long familiar with the Cheyennes expressed concern that those people would rather die than abandon the Smoky Hill. Ultimately, while ratification was delayed in Congress, Black Kettle, pressured by warriors of the soldier groups, disavowed the cession of the Smoky Hill country specified in the treaty. Wynkoop was dispatched to pacify the tribesmen and to issue a warning: "If the government is obliged to open war upon them, *all* the people will suffer terribly. . . ."[10] After lengthy discussions, the agent elicited promises from the Cheyenne chiefs in the Smoky Hill country to comply with the treaty, including a notable statement that if "any of their young men hereafter . . . committed any act offensive to the whites, they would confiscate his property or if necessary for an example, *kill him.*"[11] Other chiefs, however, reported that the soldier societies among them, together with the Dog Soldiers, remained determined to close the Smoky Hill Trail. Within weeks, several violent episodes occurred resulting in depredations, including the deaths of whites by Cheyenne warriors under Bull Bear. Wynkoop, now appointed agent for the Cheyennes, Arapahos, and Kiowa-Apaches, tried again with his associates to placate Black Kettle, Little Robe, and the other chiefs, this time

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[10]Commissioner of Indian Affairs Dennis A. Cooley to Wynkoop, July 25, 1866, in *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1866* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1866), pp. 278-79, quoted in Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, p. 261.

[11]Wynkoop to Cooley, August 11, 1866, in Upper Arkansas Agency, Letters Received (LR), quoted in Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 261-62.

with gifts, and in November, at a council at Fort Zarah, Kansas, managed to induce the leaders to sign the Little Arkansas Treaty amendments.[12]

But the matter was not over. Although Major Wynkoop reported general contentment among the Cheyennes following the Fort Zarah councils, the military commander of the Department of the Missouri, Major General Winfield Scott Hancock, demanded that the warriors who had committed the killings of whites and stealing of livestock be turned over or face attack by United States troops. Wynkoop was again pressed to investigate the subject and find out which tribe was responsible for the recent forays. Department commander Hancock had the support of Lieutenant General William T. Sherman, commanding the Military Division of the Missouri, and in whose administrative province the proposed operations would occur. Initially, Sherman believed that citizen complaints against the tribes were overblown, but he nevertheless projected the removal of the tribes from Kansas and Nebraska to reservations north and south, thereby opening a wide swath for travel and settlement by Euroamericans. Word in December, 1866, of the loss of Captain William J. Fetterman and eighty soldiers near Fort Philip Kearny, Dakota Territory (present Wyoming), at the hands of Teton Sioux and Northern Cheyennes, coupled with Hancock's reports of the Smoky Hill killings by Cheyennes served to intensify his view. Of the subject tribes he wrote: "They must be exterminated, for they cannot and will not settle down, and our people will force us to do it." Late in 1866, Hancock, still calling for the surrender of the offending tribesmen while gathering additional evidence against them, began preparations for a spring campaign against the Cheyennes. Further planning to demonstrate the power and authority of the army to tribes throughout the Great Plains, Hancock stated that the

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[12]Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 261-64.

Cheyenne people "appear to be as deserving of chastisement as any other."[13]

Aware of the inordinate traffic between the Cheyennes and traders for guns and ammunition, Hancock, on Sherman's direction, in January 1867 ordered discontinued all sales of ordnance to the Indians in the area of the Arkansas River. The dictum touched off a debate between the commissioner of Indian Affairs and the army. The commissioner maintained that existing statutes permitted supplying arms to the tribesmen for hunting, but Hancock rejected the argument because of the recent depredations by the Cheyennes. Agent Wynkoop sided with his charges in the exchange, but Hancock pointed to evidence of recent thefts of livestock by the tribesmen from buffalo hunters and a wagon train, as well as weapons and other goods from a trader at Fort Dodge. In the end, with General Sherman's sanction and support, Hancock moved forward with his plans. The expedition would move into the Indian country and determine whether the Cheyennes and Kiowas wanted to talk or fight and grant them their preference. He would not initiate a contest. If the chiefs promised to adhere to previous treaty agreements, the army would leave them alone, but Hancock intended to warn them to keep their young men under control in the area of the overland routes. Sherman was intent on setting an example, and urged getting among the Indians and killing a sufficient number to inspire the others to stay on the reservation and keep the peace.[14]

While deferring a planned expedition against the Sioux and Cheyennes on the Northern

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[13]Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 265-68; Sherman to John Sherman, December 30, 1866. William T. Sherman Papers, Library of Congress (first quote), quoted in ibid., p. 268; Hancock to Wynkoop, December 17, 1866, in *Reports of Major General Hancock upon Indian Affairs with Accompanying Exhibits*, pp. 14-15 (second quote), quoted in ibid., p. 268.

[14]Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 270-72.

Plains because of ongoing peace initiatives with those tribesmen, Sherman gave Hancock the go-ahead in the south and that officer opened his offensive in April, 1867. Fourteen hundred soldiers convened at Fort Larned, Kansas--troops of the Seventh Cavalry, Thirty-seventh Infantry, and Fourth Artillery. There Hancock met with a small delegation of warriors and chiefs, including Tall Bull, leader of the Dog Soldiers who were encamped at Pawnee Fork of the Arkansas, thirty-five miles west of the post, and deliver them a strong lecture about war and peace. Next day Hancock moved his army up to Pawnee Fork to impart the same message to the remaining chiefs. Their approach startled the Cheyennes and Lakotas in the camp, many of whom feared another Sand Creek-type massacre; many abandoned the village before Hancock's arrival, and those who stayed were gone by the following morning. Hancock interpreted the vacated camp as a sign that the Indians meant war, and he sent troops led by Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer north in pursuit of them. But the people split into small groups, frustrating the cavalry chase, and by the time Custer reached the Smoky Hill Trail he found citizens killed, stage stations burned out, livestock stolen, and his quest stymied by insufficient forage. Hancock, meantime, ruminated over whether to burn the abandoned Cheyenne-Sioux village, realizing that its destruction would insure war with the Indians. Word from Custer of the devastation on the Smoky Hill finally decided the issue, and over protests from Agents Wynkoop and Leavenworth the general torched the camp.

With a vengeful reaction from the Cheyennes assured, Hancock moved on to intimidate other area tribes. He met with chiefs of the Arapahos and Kiowas, cowing them with the same tones, then proceeded west to Fort Hays, where Custer had repaired to await forage for his horses. Hancock directed him to remain there until his animals were strong and then to prosecute

a vigorous campaign against the Sioux and Cheyennes. The general then headed east to his Fort Leavenworth headquarters, leaving Custer to his devices. The Indians, meantime, exorcized over Hancock's burning of their village and property, laid waste to the Platte, Smoky Hill, and Arkansas routes, destroying stage and mail stations, attacking coaches and wagon trains, and engaging railroad workers. Cheyennes attacked the garrison at Fort Wallace in extreme western Kansas.

Finally, in early June Custer set out to find and punish the responsible warriors in an onerous month-long march of a thousand miles that ranged through the Smoky Hill, Platte, and Republican river country but which brought few and insignificant actions with the Sioux. The weary column, some of its men having deserted and its animals fatigued, struggled back into Fort Wallace with no decisive encounters. One dramatic clash occurred when Dog Soldiers and Sioux warriors chanced on a ten-man detachment headed by Second Lieutenant Lyman S. Kidder, who was carrying orders to Custer, and surrounded and killed them all. By late summer, however, most of the peace-prone chiefs had led their followers south of the Arkansas, leaving the bands dominated by the military societies and the Dog Soldiers to continue raiding to the north. By then, too, Kansas Governor Samuel J. Crawford had orchestrated the enlistment of volunteers--the Eighteenth Kansas Cavalry--to help the regulars patrol arteries in the state. In August, 1867, two companies of the Eighteenth Kansas aided regulars of the all-black Tenth Cavalry in fighting several hundred Sioux and Cheyenne warriors at Beaver Creek, Kansas. This action, plus Hancock's destruction of the Cheyenne camp at Pawnee Fork followed by Custer's largely impotent showing chasing through western Kansas and Nebraska and eastern Colorado, including the loss of Lieutenant Kidder and his men, constituted the primary results of the

Hancock Expedition and its initial message of intimidation to the Cheyennes and their allies, but which left the scene with muddled prospects for any meaningful immediate peace.[15]

Meantime, the chiefs who had generally favored peace and trade with the whites had clearly been intimidated by the prospect of Hancock's expedition. Black Kettle forecasted trouble with the troops and decided to move south with his followers, along with the Comanches, Kiowas, and Kiowa-Apaches, who also anticipated such difficulties. A virulent cholera epidemic that struck the frontier forts in the late summer of 1867 likely also prompted his removal south. In the Indian Territory, along the north fork of the Canadian River, Black Kettle settled his people briefly near a Comanche village. Here they bartered buffalo robes with white traders before moving on to the south fork of the Canadian, where they learned of Hancock's destruction of the camp at Pawnee Fork and the deaths of Cheyennes in a fight with troops at Cimarron Crossing. Black Kettle's people continued south and on reaching the Washita River found Little Raven's Arapahos. A few weeks later the Cheyennes moved up the Washita seeking buffalo and eventually encountered other bands of Cheyennes that had come south out of Kansas. War parties from these assorted bands soon rode back north to take part in and intensify the raids instigated by Hancock's action at Pawnee Fork.[16]

Then, on July 20, 1867--in the midst of Hancock's campaign--Congress established a commission to negotiate peace with all of the warring tribesmen on the northern and southern

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[15]Robert M. Utley, *Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866-1891* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1973), pp. 115-20. See also, Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 39-47. Personal accounts of Hancock's campaign appear in Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, pp. 255-66; and George A. Custer, *My Life on the Plains; or, Personal Experiences with Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), pp.

[16]Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, pp. 268-72.

plains. The commission, authorized in response to recommendations of Senator Doolittle's report on the condition of the tribes as well as to the demands of both humanitarians and those who wanted the Indians severely punished, included prominent army officers as well as congressmen and political appointees. The purpose of the commission was to separate the so-called "hostile" Indians from friendly ones and to remove all from the routes of western emigration, transit, and commerce. Headed by Commissioner of Indian Affairs Nathaniel G. Taylor, the commission included Missouri Senator John B. Henderson; General Sherman (whose official absence at the southern plains councils necessitated the temporary appointment of Major General Christopher C. Auger, commander of the Military Department of the Platte); retired Major General William S. Harney; Brigadier General Alfred H. Terry, commander of the Military Department of Dakota; Samuel F. Tappan, former officer of the Colorado volunteers, peace advocate, and friend of Agent Wynkoop; and John B. Sanborn, who had helped negotiate the Little Arkansas Treaty. While the commissioners dealt with the northern tribes, preparations ensued for councils to take place with the southern peoples at Fort Larned, Kansas, beginning in October.[17]

When Black Kettle rode into Fort Larned on September 3, 1867, he exercised little influence beyond his own followers. Although the attendant Arapahos openly blamed the Cheyennes for all depredations that had occurred along the Arkansas, most of the acts had in fact been committed by Dog Soldiers and members of the military societies in the scattered bands of Cheyennes, besides Sioux warriors who customarily ranged the Platte River country. Yet other deeds of plunder were correctly ascribed to young men who left other Cheyenne camps against

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[17]Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, p. 289.

the wishes of their leaders. Black Kettle, according to George Bent, because of his continued stance for peace at this time commanded little authority in wider Cheyenne circles and had become an object of ridicule among other Cheyennes. Despite this, he and the peace chiefs of the Kiowas, Comanches, Kiowa Apaches, and other tribes were ready to hear what the commissioners had to say.[18]

Although the commissioners remained optimistic of results, many army observers felt otherwise. "A general peace will doubtless be concluded,--which will last till Spring," recorded one officer, ". . . though the Commissioners seem to believe that it will be *permanent*!"[19] At the tribes' insistence, the meetings were moved to Medicine Lodge Creek, a traditional Indian ceremonial site in southern Kansas. Among the Cheyennes, only Black Kettle's band offered a certain commitment to attend. After much deliberation and prodding from emissaries sent by Indian Superintendent Murphy, part of the large Cheyenne village that included the Dog Soldiers and chiefs Tall Bull, Roman Nose, Bull Bear, Big Head, and Medicine Arrows, agreed to come to the appointed ground and join in the discussions. Preceding the council, hearings were held regarding Hancock's expedition, the testimony concluding that the operation had been ill conceived. That finding helped clear the air and facilitate a more positive atmosphere. When the council opened on October 19, 250 lodges of Cheyennes were present, but not all of the soldier society members appeared. George Bent attended the proceedings with the Cheyennes and left the following description of the physical arrangement of the various Indian groups at the council

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[18]Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 290-91.

[19]Robert M. Utley (ed.), *Life in Custer's Cavalry: Diaries and Letters of Albert and Jennie Barnitz, 1867-1868* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 110.

ground:

> The great camp was in a beautiful hollow through which flowed Medicine Lodge Creek, with its lovely wooded banks. This was a favorite place for the summer medicine-making of the Indians also for their winter camps. At the head of the camp were the Arapahos, under Little Raven, with about one hundred and seven lodges; next, in a fine grove, were the Comanches, with one hundred lodges, under Ten Bears and Silver Brooch; below them were the Kiowas, under White Bear, Black Eagle, Sitting Bear, and Kicking Eagle, with one hundred and fifty lodges; and next were the Apaches, eighty-five lodges, under Poor Bear. The council grounds were in the center, in a grove of tall elms. Across the creek from the council grounds was Black Kettle's camp of sixty lodges. The remainder of the Cheyennes were camped several miles away on the Cimarron river. . . . Fully five thousand Indians were encamped here, each Indian village being pitched in a circle. Thousands of ponies covered the adjacent hills and valleys near the camp. . . .[20]

With the Cheyennes still smarting over the destruction of their village at Pawnee Fork the previous spring, the presence of 500 soldiers of the Seventh Cavalry, besides a battery of Gatling guns, which had accompanied the commissioners from Fort Larned, created an air of intimidation at the outset. The Dog Soldiers, however, were not impressed. "When I signed the treaty at Little Arkansas," Tall Bull told the commissioners, "I intended to live by it; but when we were treated as we were by General Hancock, I became ashamed that I had consented to the treaty. I

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[20]Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, pp. 283-84.

became blind with rage, and what I have done since, I am not ashamed of."[21] Speaking for the commission, Senator Henderson, chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, admonished the Cheyennes and Arapahos on the matter of continued warfare. "Why should we war against each other?" he asked. "The world is large enough for us all. . . . War long continued must end in the total destruction of the Indian because his numbers are less."[22]

But many of the Cheyennes did not get Henderson's message. For various reasons, including purported religious ones, the Cheyennes' appearance at the councils was intermittent at best, and it was only late in the proceedings--on October 28--after the gift deliveries to the other tribes began--that the Cheyennes and Arapahos signed the Medicine Lodge Treaty.[23] Black Kettle's stature among the Cheyenne leadership, meantime, already impaired following Sand Creek and the renewal of his position for peace, clearly antagonized the Dog Soldiers. The chief was directed to appear at the Cimarron camps and explain what benefit would accrue by seeking peace. Tall Bull reportedly threatened to kill all of Black Kettle's horses if the chief failed to respond; as a result, Black Kettle journeyed from Medicine Lodge Creek to the Cimarron and talked with his kinsmen.[24]

The Medicine Lodge accords permanently removed and concentrated the signatory tribes

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[21]*Proceedings of the Great Peace Commission of 1867-1868* (Washington: The Institute for the Development of Indian Law, 1975), p. 82.

[22]Ibid., p. 80.

[23]Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 294-97.

[24]Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, p. 297; Douglas C. Jones, *The Treaty of Medicine Lodge* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), p. 98. Black Kettle's discomfiture as a peace proponent *vis-a-vis* other Cheyenne leaders at the proceedings was noticed by some of the reporters present and is discussed in ibid., pp. 138-40.

on two reservations in the Indian Territory (present Oklahoma), one for the Kiowas, Comanches, and Kiowa Apaches, and one for the Southern Cheyennes and Arapahos. For the Cheyennes and Arapahos, the treaty more than halved the land base given them two years earlier in the Little Arkansas Treaty, and perhaps too optimistically led off with the salient phrase: "From this day forward all war between the parties to this agreement shall forever cease." In essence granting the Indians all lands lying between the Arkansas and Cimarron rivers in the present state of Oklahoma, Article 2 of the accord formally stipulated:

> The United States agrees that the following district of country, to wit: commencing at the point where the Arkansas River crosses the 37th parallel of north latitude, thence west on said parallel--the said line being the southern boundary of the State of Kansas--to the Cimarone [sic] River, (sometimes called the Red Fork of the Arkansas River), thence down said Cimarone River, in the middle of the main channel thereof, to the Arkansas River; thence up the Arkansas River, in the middle of the main channel thereof, to the place of beginning, shall be and the same is hereby set apart for the absolute and undisturbed use and occupation of the Indians herein named, and for such other friendly tribes or individual Indians, as from time to time they may be willing, with the consent of the United States, to admit among them. . . .[25]

Besides other things, the Indians conceded emigrant travel over the trails and continued railroad construction, and accepted the government's proffered schools and inducements for promoting agriculture and severalty among them. The treaty promised the tribesmen clothing and an annual

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[25]Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, II (Treaties), 985.

stipend of $20,000 to benefit the people. As for traditional pursuits, the terms allowed the Cheyennes and Arapahos to continue hunting buffalo in the favored Kansas lands south of the Arkansas River, but the Indians were to remain peaceful and commit no further depredations. [26] Specifically, the treaty stated that:

> If bad men among the Indians shall commit a wrong or depredation upon the person or property of any one, white, black, or Indian, subject to the authority of the United States and at peace therewith, the tribes herein named solemnly agree that they will, on proof made to their agent, and notice by him, deliver up the wrongdoer to the United States, to be tried and punished according to its laws; and in case they wilfully refuse so to do, the person injured shall be re-imbursed for his loss from the annuities or other moneys due or to become due to them under this or other treaties made with the United States.[27]

Following the pact, the commissioners distributed presents--including ammunition for hunting with promises of more to come-- to an estimated 2,000-plus Cheyennes, 500 of whom were warriors. Those who signed the treaty represented all of the diverse bands of the Southern Cheyennes as well as the prevailing philosophies within them, notably the peace faction and the Dog Soldiers and soldier societies. Cheyenne chiefs acceding at Medicine Lodge Creek were Black Kettle, Bull Bear, Little Bear, Spotted Elk, Buffalo Chief, Slim Face, Grey Head, Little Rock, Curly Hair, Tall Bull, White Horse, Little Robe, Whirlwind, and Heap of Birds. Together,

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[26]See the entire text of the treaty in ibid. Discussion of provisions is in Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 297-99; and West, *Contested Plains*, p. 310.

[27]Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, II (Treaties), 985.

these chiefs represented the polarity of Cheyenne convictions regarding peace and war. Arapaho signatories included Little Raven, Yellow Bear, and Storm. In the course of the deliberations at Medicine Lodge Creek, Black Kettle stood out as the principal consistent force for peace among his tribesmen. In so doing, however, some of the newspaper correspondents present believed that Black Kettle personally endangered himself with other elements of the Cheyennes. The Treaty of Medicine Lodge was not ratified in the Senate until July 25, 1868 and was not proclaimed until August 19, 1868.[28] Naturally, the bureaucratic process brought delays in congressional appropriations to enact its provisions. By then, too, other factors had come to bear to nullify much of the document's intent regarding war and peace.

Following such an agreement with the Indians as at Medicine Lodge, there was always a question as to whether the tribesmen fully understood the results of their action in signing the convention. A Seventh Cavalry officer who was present at the proceedings recorded in his diary his belief that the Cheyennes "had *no idea that* they are giving up, or that they have ever given up, the country which they claim as their own--the country north of the Arkansas. The treaty all amounts to nothing, and we will certainly have another war sooner or later with the Cheyennes, at least, and probably with the other Indians, in consequence of misunderstanding of the terms of present and previous treaties."[29] Probably but a small fraction of the Southern Cheyennes were

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[28]Ibid., pp. 984, 989; Jones, *Treaty of Medicine Lodge*, pp. 165-87, 205-06; Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 298-99. A contemporary summary of the treaty, along with those others negotiated with the plains tribes in 1867-68, appears in *The American Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1868* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1870), pp. 379-80. For a military observer's contemporary view of the events, see Utley, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, pp. 105-16.

[29]Utley, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 115.

not represented at Medicine Lodge Creek. Beyond the above-quoted provision regarding depredations, however, the treaty did not address matters of intertribal warfare. In November, 1867, following a horse-stealing raid against them by Kaw Indians in the Indian Territory, Cheyenne and Arapaho warriors mounted several retaliatory strikes that eventually flared into open warfare and once more threatened the Kansas frontier. Added to this was the availability of liquor to the tribesmen, who increasingly bartered buffalo robes with traders for whiskey. Within months of Medicine Lodge, too, the Cheyennes complained over the non-receipt of guns and ammunition promised them for hunting. A trend was also appearing that forecasted further trouble, in that all the while that the peace chiefs, including Black Kettle and Little Robe, came into Forts Dodge and Larned to receive provisions, their young men intensified their raiding activities against the Kaws in the area of the Arkansas Valley. Agent Wynkoop heard of these continuing intertribal forays and learned that the chiefs endorsed them because the Kaws had instigated the warfare.[30]

During the late fall and winter of 1867-68, the intertribal raiding activities of the Cheyennes against not only the Kaws but the Osages, too, diminished by the season, nonetheless gave every indication of continuance whenever weather permitted. Early in February, Wynkoop reported his Cheyennes to be "congregated in the neighborhood of a point sixty miles south of Fort Dodge." The people, who included Black Kettle's followers, remained perturbed by the nonappearance of the arms and ammunition for hunting promised them by the commissioners, yet Wynkoop described his charges as "very tranquill [sic]" as he anticipated visiting them to turn over the property seized by Hancock the previous spring. A major fear came not from the

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[30]Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 299-301.

Cheyennes, but from the Kiowas, who reportedly fell in with some white wolfers, killing one while stealing their equipment. Interpreter John S. Smith urged that the Cheyennes be allowed to move north of the Arkansas River to be removed from the negative influence of the Kiowas, advice that was seemingly ignored.[31]

Delays in Congress in effecting the terms of the Medicine Lodge Treaty only increased tensions among the Cheyennes and Arapahos through the winter. Further aggravations came in an ongoing survey of the Osage reservation within the designated treaty boundary that the Indians apparently did not fully understand. Moreover, interpreters strategically placed with the bands at government expense to track and report their movements were more interested in promoting private trade. Wynkoop complained that "I never receive any reports from any of them; the only way in which I am able to gain any information in regard to the Indians, is in person or keeping a scout constantly running between them and the agency."[32]

Although the prevailing post-Medicine Lodge calm lasted through most of the winter of 1867-68, there were signs of a burgeoning unrest among the Cheyennes and Arapahos that transcended the political delays keeping goods and arms from the Indian camps. Many of these were grounded in age-old life ways concerning war practice traditions that white Americans at the time could not fathom, and that included intertribal competition as well as the spiritual,

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[31]Wynkoop to Murphy, February 1, 1868, in U.S. Senate, 40 Cong., 3 sess., *Letter of the Secretary of the Interior, communicating, In compliance with the resolution of the Senate of the 14th ultimo, information in relation to the late battle of the Washita River.* Ex. Doc. No. 13 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1869) (hereafter cited as Sen. Ex. Doc. No. 13), pp. 1-2; Smith to Murphy, February 20, 1868. National Archives (NA), Record Group (RG) 393. Records of United States Army Continental Commands. Part 1, Entry 2601, Box 1.

[32]Murphy to Nathaniel G. Taylor, February 20, 1868, in Sen. Ex. Doc. 13, p. 3; Quote is in Wynkoop to Murphy, February 1, 1868, in ibid., p. 2.

psychological, and social reckoning involved in the attainment of warrior status by the young men of the tribe. For the Cheyennes in particular, chronic intertribal warfare was a cornerstone of their existence on the plains and constituted a deadly enterprise of extenuating facets to guarantee their survival; this reality helps explain the considerably large geographical areas historically claimed by the Cheyennes despite their relatively small numbers. For many young men, moreover, warfare comprised a rite of passage, and its practice was necessary to attain status within society. Because of the framework of Cheyenne society, the activities of young men bent on raiding prestige and warrior success--components that were culturally ingrained and therefore normal exercises conducive to establishing a reputation--were not easily tempered, governed, or eliminated by other tribal members, including chiefs, since they represented ritualized behavior typically affecting personal growth and societal status.[33] This was something that white observers could not comprehend.

In the months following the Medicine Lodge Treaty the attempt to maintain peace became unraveled because of a complication of issues, some of them contemporary, some historical, and some cultural. Certainly, the memory of what had happened to Black Kettle's people at Sand Creek was omnipresent, creating a lingering paranoia among them and other Cheyennes and Arapahos that it would happen again. Hancock's performance in the events surrounding the destruction of the Cheyenne village at Pawnee Fork confirmed in many of the people's minds the inevitability of yet another military strike--and probably successive ones at that-- and despite the air clearing at Medicine Lodge this fear doubtless remained. As well, the Sand Creek disaster

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[33]Moore, *The Cheyenne*, pp. 112-13; E. Adamson Hoebel, *The Cheyennes: Indians of the Great Plains* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), pp. 70-72.

seems to have exacerbated existing schisms among the Southern Cheyennes as a whole, and especially between leaders like Black Kettle and Little Robe, who still counseled conciliation, and the seemingly vacillating Dog Soldiers and members of the interband military societies who had but grudgingly and tenuously acceded to the accord. Increased warfare with the Kaws and Osages, longtime enemies, compounded these conditions, promoted cultural responses, and created extraordinary pressures on Cheyenne band hierarchies to control their young men, strictures not only inimical to the tenets of Cheyenne society but impossible to fulfill. Added to these was political shortsightedness in setting aside the designated reservations and establishing their government as called for by the commissioners in their report--beyond the additional delay in ratification of the treaty; anticipated supplies were consequently not forthcoming, and that created dissatisfaction and distrust. During the early months of 1868, these extant realities and conditions contributed to the evolving scenario that finally led to the punitive army campaign against the Southern Cheyennes.

Chapter Three: Depredations

On January 12, 1868, a party of twenty-five Cheyenne and Arapaho warriors, en route to raid the Utes, visited the stage station at Cimarron Crossing and demanded entrance. This denied, they approached a nearby government wagon train loaded with supplies for Forts Lyon and Reynolds, Colorado Territory. The warriors became intimidating in their manner, brandishing revolvers and making threats. Over the next twenty-four hours, they rifled the wagon contents before taking the unarmed trainmen's rations and leaving. Little more than a month later, trouble with the Kiowas arose at Fort Arbuckle, Indian Territory, when they threatened Indian Agent Jesse Leavenworth's party involved in negotiating the release of white captives taken the previous fall. While no lives were lost, both incidents pointed up the growing turbulence among the Indians in the wake of Medicine Lodge and exhibited frustrations that would accelerate and explode along the Kansas-Colorado frontier over the coming weeks and months.[1]

Although the events of January and February forecasted trouble to military authorities, the agents responsible for the tribes continued to project a sense of amity and understanding that denied reality. In April, Wynkoop professed that his wards were "in a happy and quiet state," although prior to the delivery of emergency rations they were "destitute" and "almost starving." He branded as false rumors of impending Indian hostility, although the static conditions affecting

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[1]Major Henry Douglas, Third Infantry, to Colonel Chauncy McKeever, Assistant Adjutant General (AAG), Department of the Missouri, January 16, 1868. NA, RG 393. Part I, Entry 2601, Box 1; Captain James W. Walsh to First Lieutenant Richard H. Pratt, Tenth Cavalry, March 12, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 4.

the Cheyennes' and Arapahos' animus toward the neighboring Kaws and Osages still loomed. When Wynkoop proposed a council of the concerned tribes to seek peace, the Cheyennes and Arapahos told him they would consider it only after they struck back at their enemies. Despite the supposed accord of Medicine Lodge, uncertainties over the Indian situation began to affect industry and commerce. Officials of the Central Branch of the Union Pacific Railroad (later renamed the Kansas Pacific Railroad), then building through Kansas and fearing molestation by the tribes, petitioned Washington authorities for protection during extension of the line through the Republican Valley into Nebraska. Similarly, troops were dispatched from Fort Wallace, in western Kansas, to protect the stage route into Colorado Territory.[2]

From afar, the army hierarchy adopted a stance of watchful waiting to see what happened on the plains during the months following the peace commission's efforts. The entire region, north and south, fell into the administrative domain of the Military Division of the Missouri, headed by General Sherman from headquarters in St. Louis. One of the subsidiary commands in Sherman's division was the Department of the Missouri, which in 1867 consisted of a broad central region comprising the states of Missouri and Kansas, the Indian Territory, New Mexico Territory, and most of Colorado Territory.[3] In September, 1867, following the highly criticized

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[2]Wynkoop to Murphy, April 10, 1868, in Sen. Ex. Doc. 13, pp. 3-4; Effingham H. Nichols to Secretary of the Interior Orville H. Browning, April 11, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 4; Captain J. Schuyler Crosby to Captain Edwin Butler, Fifth Infantry, May 16, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2571, p. 453. This railroad company was distinct from the Union Pacific Railroad that built from Omaha to Utah.

[3]Raphael P. Thian (comp.), *Notes Illustrating the Military Geography of the United States, 1813-1880* (reprint; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), p. 76. Forts Morgan and Sedgwick, Colorado Territory, along with the stage road from Fort Sedgwick to Denver and New Mexico were made part of the Department of the Platte in 1867. Ibid.

Hancock Expedition, a major overhaul in the department saw Major General Philip H. Sheridan succeed Hancock. Sheridan, regarded as a brilliant strategist, had commanded the Cavalry Corps of the Army of the Potomac during the Civil War, and was one of the front-rank triumvirate of heroes to emerge from the struggle garnering public idolatry, the others being Commanding General Ulysses S. Grant and Division Commander Sherman. Like them, and especially Sherman, Sheridan advocated a doctrine of "total war" supposedly borne of their experiences in the South--the process of subjecting civilian (or "innocent") populations to the full rigors of intensive physical and psychological warfare by any means possible on the belief that by doing so the war would be shortened and more lives in the long run saved.[4] Sheridan did not take personal charge of his new command until March, 1868, when he arrived at his headquarters at Fort Leavenworth, in eastern Kansas. Within Sheridan's new command were four military districts. They were the District of New Mexico, commanded by Colonel George W. Getty, Thirty-seventh Infantry; the District of the Indian Territory, commanded since May, 1868, by Colonel Benjamin

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[4]For explication of Sheridan and his military philosophy, see Paul A. Hutton, *Phil Sheridan and His Army* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), *passim*; and Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, pp. 142-43. The roots of the "total war" concept as applied in Indian warfare has been debated, with some historians believing that its antecedents lay in the devastation techniques of Sherman's and Sheridan's armies in the South (see, e.g., Robert M. Utley, *Cavalier in Buckskin: George Armstrong Custer and the Western Military Frontier* [Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988], p. 60) and with others suggesting that it evolved more or less naturally from unique postwar frontier army and Indian circumstances and conditions (Robert Wooster, *The Military and United States Indian Policy, 1865-1903* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988], pp. 135-43). For a balanced discussion, see Perry D. Jamieson, *Crossing the Deadly Ground: United States Army Tactics, 1865-1899* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994), pp. 50-52. The answer probably lies somewhere in between, but it should be noted that army surprise attacks on Indian villages are of record before and during the Civil War, including Brigadier General William S. Harney's attack on Lakotas and Cheyennes at Blue Water Creek in 1855, Colonel Patrick E. Connor's strike against Shoshones at Bear River in 1863, and Chivington's attack on the Southern Cheyennes and Arapahos at Sand Creek in 1864.

H. Grierson, Tenth Cavalry; the District of Kansas, under Major Thomas C. English, Fifth Infantry, and which included Forts Leavenworth and Riley; and the District of the Upper Arkansas, commanded since May, 1868, by Lieutenant Colonel Alfred Sully, Third Infantry.

For various reasons, of all the districts under Sheridan's command, that of the Upper Arkansas had become the most complicated by early 1868. Sheridan concisely described its parameters and circumstances in his annual report for that year:

> The district of the Upper Arkansas embraces nearly all the territory of Colorado, and that portion of Kansas west of a north and south line, through Fort Harker. . . . It had within its limits the territory of the Cheyennes, Arapahoes, Kiowas, and Comanches, which they had agreed to give up in their treaty with the peace commission. The two great commercial highways to Colorado and New Mexico [the Smoky Hill Trail and the Santa Fe Trail], and the lateral roads connecting them, from [Forts] Harker to Larned, Hays to Dodge, and Wallace to Lyon, pass through the district, also the western line of frontier settlements in Kansas, and the eastern line of settlements in Colorado, which, from their scattered and helpless condition, were much exposed, and invited the cupidity of the savages. . . . To guard the lines of the Union Pacific railroad, and the Denver stage road, and other interests in this district, there had been established in 1867 the posts of Forts Harker, Hays, and Wallace, and the outpost of Cedar Point; and to guard the line of the Arkansas to New Mexico, there were the posts of Forts Larned, Dodge, Lyon, and Reynolds, and the outposts of Zarah and Camp Beecher, at the mouth of the Little Arkansas. All these posts were . . . garrisoned by eight companies of

> the 10th cavalry, 7th cavalry, 5th and 3d infantry, and four companies of the 38th infantry, all very reduced in numbers, which gave me a force of about 1,200 cavalry and about 1,400 infantry.[5]

It was under Sheridan's military oversight that relations between the government and the Cheyennes sharply deteriorated after Medicine Lodge. Military officers at the Kansas posts made periodic reports to department headquarters of the location, status, and attitude of the various tribal bands in the region below the Arkansas. Most of these reports mentioned visits by different groups to the posts, usually monthly, for the purpose of obtaining light rations of sugar, flour, and tobacco, issues authorized by Sherman through Sheridan in the interests of keeping the peace. The reports are useful indicators of the movements of some of the Indians throughout parts of the region and their motivation beyond receipt of provisions. For example, the reports indicate that all the tribes (Kiowa, Comanche, Arapaho, and Cheyenne) generally remained below the Arkansas within their designated tracts. In the spring of 1868, the Kiowas and Comanches were undertaking an expedition against the Navahos that eventually proved unsuccessful. The Arapahos and Cheyennes were pursuing their own campaign against the Kaws and Osages, and at one time authorities estimated that some eight war parties totaling 800 or 900 men from both tribes were involved in seeking vengeance on those people. Bands of Cheyennes and Arapahos intermittently visited Forts Dodge and Larned for provisions, then returned to their haunts below the Arkansas. A few bodies of Arapahos lingered near the posts, but most of the Cheyennes stayed away. In April, 1868, Medicine Wolf and forty-one Dog Soldiers and their

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[5]Sheridan's report, October 15, 1868, in *Report of the Secretary of War, 1868* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1869), pp. 16-17.

families came in to Larned en route to the Smoky Hill to reclaim the remains of that chief's children killed the previous summer. Medicine Wolf pronounced his "intentions peaceable to all whites," and one report erroneously tied this Dog Soldier leader to Black Kettle's people. That chief's village was apparently located near Fort Larned. In May, 1868, a body of Cheyennes was reported as camped on the middle branch of Pawnee Fork, and by July a particularly large group of 275 lodges including many Dog Soldiers stood along Walnut Creek that the military authorities had deemed "at present quiet."[6]

In spite of this apparent tranquility, as the spring of 1868 wore on, conditions for open conflict increased. Incidents arose that juxtaposed troops and Indians into an inevitably widening scenario. Some incidents that took place clearly involved warriors who wanted food and clothing and who acted on that need. Because of deep-seated and ongoing intertribal disputes, incidents and events that were reported seem always to have involved one or another of the belligerent tribes. Early in May, a party of twenty Indians, tribe unknown, accosted settlers on Big Creek, taking food and garments. Arapahos were suspected because warriors from that tribe also tried to steal cattle from a herd escorted by a cavalry detachment near Wilson's Creek. Other Indians took food from a nearby rancher. When Indians attacked and killed two men in mid-May near

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[6]Major Henry Douglas to Captain Samuel L. Barr, AAAG, District of the Upper Arkansas, March 21, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 1; illegible to AAG, Department of the Missouri, enclosing Major Meredith H. Kidd's weekly report of Indian movements, March 25, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 4; Douglas to Barr, March 28, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 1; Captain Nicholas Nolan to Barr, April 5, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 3; Major John E. Yard to Barr, April 17, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 4; Douglas to Barr, April 18, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 1; Douglas to Barr, May 5, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 1; Lieutenant Colonel Alfred Sully to AAG, Department of the Missouri, July 18, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 4.

their homes on Walnut Creek, the suspected culprits were estimated to be Cheyennes or Osages. Soon after this, the post trader near Fort Zarah addressed a letter directly to General Sheridan, recounting yet another incident of perceived Indian surliness. He described in detail how 125 Cheyennes professing hunger came to his place, which was located off the post. After he fed them, the Indians stayed on to beg for more, only leaving when a government train bound from Fort Lyon to Fort Harker appeared. They approached the train with pistols blazing, then likewise intimidated a Mexican train passing by. Finally, in the night, the warriors set fire to the trader's store, destroying it. He reported that the Indians drew their revolvers on, and otherwise insulted, members of the small army detachment at nearby Fort Zarah. Although the official report of the matter suggested that the incident was the work of white men rather than Indians, it referred to the "ill feeling existing among the Cheyennes" over the unfulfilled treaty promises.[7]

Chagrined at these developments in his new jurisdiction, Sheridan responded to the news with a recitation of recent events. He cited four instances of depredations or threatened depredations involving the Cheyennes, but concluded that "General Sherman's instructions to me do not cover offensive operations on my part, until there is a declaration of war on the part of the President. . . ." Instead, Sheridan authorized Colonel Sully, commanding the District of the Upper Arkansas, "to attack and kill any of these marauding parties caught committing

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[7]Second Lieutenant Elbridge G. Manning, Fifth Infantry, to Captain Mason Howard, May 19, 1868, enclosing James R. Mead to Commander U.S. Forces, Mouth of Little Arkansas, May 18, 1868, and note from Louis Booth, May 18, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 3; Manning to Captain Samuel L. Barr, AAAG, District of the Upper Arkansas, May 1, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 3; J.W. Douglas to Sheridan, May 23, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 1; Brigadier General Alfred Sully, District of the Upper Arkansas, to AAG Department of the Missouri, May 25, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 4.

depredations."[8] In a missive of May 27, the general told Sully about repeated incidents of "insolence and bad behavior on the part of the Cheyennes. I do not know what this will eventually result in, but it should put us on our guard." Respecting the murder of the two men on Walnut Creek purportedly by the Osages, Sheridan commented: "I . . . think it was done by the Cheyennes." So consumed by the growing situation did the department commander become, that he dictated to Sully remarkably precise instructions for pursuing offending tribesmen:

> The Cavalry should be kept well-shod up and in light traveling condition, with sacks large enough to carry on the saddle twenty (20) pounds of grain, which might be made to last five (5) days of swift march, and if Indians were not overtaken in that time let the horses depend on the grass and make the march slower.[9]

More justification for these accusations followed as depredations increased in the summer of 1868. A major event was the long-anticipated retaliatory raid of the Cheyennes and Arapahos against the Kaw Indians on their reserve near Council Grove, in eastern Kansas, about twenty-five miles southeast of Fort Riley. Council Grove, with about 800 inhabitants, stood along the Santa Fe Trail at its juncture with the Neosho River in one of the more settled areas of the state. The Kaw reservation extended east from the town along the river, its agency located some four miles from Council Grove. On the early afternoon of June 3, 200 warriors headed by Little Robe suddenly appeared at Council Grove, each brandishing one or more Colt's Navy revolvers or

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[8]Sheridan to AAG, Division of the Missouri, May 17, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2571, p. 471.

[9]Sheridan to Sully, May 27, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2571, p. 469.

bows and arrows, and some wearing cavalry sabers. The appearance of the Indians decked out for war clearly startled the townspeople. Two hours later the Cheyennes and Arapahos attacked the agency buildings, but were repulsed by Kaw warriors stationed in the structures with each side sustaining minimal casualties. Professing peaceful designs, the Cheyenne party called for the return of scalps taken from them by the Kaws the previous fall, but the Kaws refused to speak with them. Before they left, Little Robe told the agent that the Cheyennes would be back with reinforcements from Black Kettle's band and would seize the scalps. Then they turned about, returning through Council Grove to camp west of the town en route back to the plains. On the way, the tribesmen, unable to find game, robbed three settler homes and killed a number of beeves. The events at Council Grove and the Kaw agency instilled fear among whites in the area who believed that an Indian massacre of citizens was about to occur. The Cheyennes and Arapahos went home via Fort Harker, telling the military representatives there that they had killed cattle at Council Grove because of their starving condition.[10]

The incident involving the Cheyennes and Arapahos and the Kaws at Council Grove served as another example of Indian intimidation of settlers, this time within the relatively settled district of eastern Kansas, and it reinforced a growing trepidation on the part of settlers toward the tribesmen. During July, cases involving the Cheyennes and Arapahos increased. Followers of the Arapaho, Yellow Bear, threatened ranchmen on Walnut Creek, and a mixed group of Cheyennes and Arapahos maliciously stole chickens and fired pistols at another settler. But in their everyday interface with whites, the Indians also had legitimate grievances. They often

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[10]Major James W. Forsyth, Tenth Cavalry, to AAG, Department of the Missouri, June 9, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 3; Sully to AAG, Department of the Missouri, June 9, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 4; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, p. 288.

complained about soldiers randomly shooting at them while they hunted in the vicinity of the water tanks along the Kansas Pacific Railroad line, and "that the passengers fire at them out of the car windows." There were also troubles with the Kiowas and Comanches. In July, Sherman wrote Sheridan of the prospect and apparent inevitability of open warfare on the plains, despite the efforts of the peace commissioners. "We must try and not inaugurate a war, for the longer it can be deferred the better for us. Of course it will come in the end." It was Sherman's belief that tribesmen guilty of depredations represented their greater tribal groups, and "that if they resort to acts of war, you have no alternative but to punish them as a whole tribe."[11] This attitude of the military authorities was critical in the evolving circumstances leading ultimately to direct military intervention on the Southern Plains in 1868.

That much of the growing problem rested with the reality that the Indians were in a destitute and starving condition, which accounted for many of their actions, was seemingly ignored by many in the Washington bureaucracy. Despite repeated notices from Commissioner of Indian Affairs Taylor and his subordinates, Congress remained sluggardly. Time and again Taylor reminded his superiors of the Indians' concerns that the nonratification of the treaty and consequent nonarrival of supplies, coupled with the constant inroads of white settlers, were threatening peace. If war erupted, wrote Taylor, it "will be brought on by reason of the sufferings and starving condition of the Indians. . . ." He urged Congress to take speedy action "to relieve

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[11]Major John E. Yard, Tenth Cavalry, to AAG, District of the Upper Arkansas, July 20, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 4; Sully to AAG, Department of the Missouri, July 18, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 4; Sherman to Sheridan, July 7, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 3.

the present wants of the most destitute, and to prevent another Indian war. . . ."[12] On the other hand, however, Taylor called for withholding promised arms and ammunition from the Cheyennes and Arapahos because of "their recent raid into the white settlements," a punishment oddly stemming from their attempt to deal with the desperate circumstances that Taylor himself had depicted for them. When Agent Wynkoop attempted to issue goods to his charges at Fort Larned in July, the Indians refused to take them until they received the promised ordnance.[13]

The delivery of arms and ammunition to the tribes in accordance with the peace council assurances might have permitted them to hunt in their customary manner and thus might have helped relieve their condition. It is not known whether Taylor saw the irony of his position regarding such distribution, but on authority of Secretary Browning Agent Wynkoop was directed to use his judgment and to issue guns and bullets after all if he thought it would help preserve peace and if "no evil will result from such delivery." "The great and principal object to be attained," Taylor wrote Indian Superintendent Murphy, "is the preservation of peace, not only between the Indians and whites, but, if possible, between the Indians themselves."[14] Consequently, on August 9, Wynkoop issued annuity goods to the Cheyennes and Arapahos at Fort Larned. In accordance with the recommendation of his superiors, and with Colonel Sully's concurrence, the agent delivered the long-awaited firearms and ammunition, amounting to 160 pistols, 8 rifles, a dozen kegs of powder, a supply of lead, and 15,000 percussion caps . "They

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[12]Taylor to Browning, June 24, 1868, in Sen. Ex. Doc. 13, pp. 4-5.

[13]Taylor to Murphy, June 25, 1868, in ibid., p. 5; Wynkoop to Murphy, July 20, 1868, in ibid.

[14]Taylor to Murphy, July 23, 1868, in ibid., pp. 6-7; Taylor to Wynkoop, July 23, 1868, in ibid., p. 7.

were delighted at receiving the goods, particularly the arms and ammunition, and never before have I known them to be better satisfied. . . ," wrote Wynkoop. The tribesmen immediately departed for their hunting grounds, causing the elated agent to remark that "I am perfectly satisfied that there will be no trouble with them this season, and consequently with no Indians of my agency."[15]

On August 10, the day after Wynkoop penned this line, perhaps 100 Southern Cheyenne warriors arrived at a thickly settled area on Saline River in north-central Kansas. Most of these Indians belonged to the assemblage of Dog Soldiers at Walnut Creek.[16] Their original purpose had been to attack a Pawnee village in Nebraska, but while seeking food at a settler's home they were fired upon. In response, the Indians captured a white woman and took her to their camp, but later returned her home. Proceeding on the next day, they reached the north fork of the Solomon where a party of whites fired on them. Avoiding this group, the warriors attacked a nearby settlement out of revenge, killing several white men and capturing two girls, who were later released. Pursued by a cavalry detachment, the war party divided with some heading north and others back to the camp at Walnut Creek. Yet another group turned toward Black Kettle's village near Fort Larned. Formal reports of the raid described how the Indians had raped two women, beat up a rancher and stole and destroyed his property, then repeated the acts on others farther down the Saline. Many settlers abandoned their homes and moved close to the railroad

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[15]Wynkoop to Murphy, August 10, 1868, in ibid., p. 9; Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, p. 305.

[16]Sheridan stated that the party was composed of "about two hundred Cheyennes, four Arapahoes, and twenty Siouxs." "Report of Major General P.H. Sheridan," September 26, 1868, in *Report of the Secretary of War, 1868* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1869), p. 343 (hereafter referred to as Sheridan's report, September 20, 1868).

line, planning to return when they believed the trouble had ended. Three days later, the warriors reappeared, renewed their activities, and moved on to the Solomon where they continued their destruction until chased off by the cavalry column. An early report accounted for nine men and a boy killed. "One woman was mortally wounded, and two others were horribly abused and violated."[17] "Heretofore Indians have been in the habit of visiting this country to hunt and have been kindly treated by the settlers," reported Lieutenant Colonel Alfred Sully, Third Infantry, commanding the District of the Upper Arkansas. "Now the settlers swear they will shoot the first Indians they see."[18] In all, over three days of rampage by the Indians, they had killed fifteen people, including two on the Republican River, raped and wounded several women, and plundered homes and driven off livestock.[19]

Months later, following the Washita engagement, army authorities got the mixed-blood Cheyenne, Edmond Guerrier, who participated in the Saline-Solomon raids, to identify the Cheyenne bands from which the warriors had come. Guerrier testified that young men from the bands of Little Rock, Black Kettle, Medicine Arrows, and Bull Bear composed the raiding party. When news of the raids reached the camps of Little Rock's and Black Kettle's Cheyennes on the

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[17]Major Thomas C. English, Fifth Infantry, to AAG, Department of the Missouri, August 18, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 2.

[18]Sully to AAG, Department of the Missouri, August 19, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 4.

[19]For the Saline and Solomon raids, see ibid.; Sheridan to Sherman, September 26, 1868, appending "List of murders, outrages, and depredations committed by Indians from 3rd August to 24th October, 1868, officially reported to Headquarters Department of the Missouri, in the field," pp. 3-5. Ben Clark Collection, Box No. C-46, Folder 1. Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Library; Sheridan's report, September 20, 1868, pp. 342-43; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, pp. 288-89; Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 305-06.

headwaters of Pawnee Fork, they precipitately moved below the Arkansas River as far as the Cimarron.[20] Ironically, the warriors who conducted the raids did not know that the issue of arms and ammunition had ultimately been made to their fellows, they having already departed to attack the Pawnees and en route were provoked into committing the outrages. This was the position of Agent Wynkoop in trying to explain what had happened.[21] But in the end, the striking out of the Dog Soldiers against the settlers of the Saline and Solomon likely signified deep-seated, subliminal, and long-simmering resentments among all the Cheyennes against the steadily increasing presence of whites in their midst. To them, whites by now had become the chief reason for their ever-shrinking land base and for the commensurate competition over game and other natural resources critical to their cultural and physical survival. In the wake of Sand Creek, Pawnee Fork, and the conclusion of less-than-satisfying treaty agreements that further reduced their lands, restrained their movements, and threatened to transform their traditional life ways, the Southern Cheyennes--perhaps more than other area tribes--had reached a defining point in their cultural identity and found themselves at a crossroads they could neither fully understand nor accept. The Saline and Solomon raids--as exemplified by the Dog Soldiers-- symbolized an ever-accreting great rage among the Cheyennes over conditions that were gradually overwhelming them as a people and as a cultural entity. General Sheridan, in assessing the situation, said that "there was not the slightest provocation offered by the soldiers or citizens for the commencement of this war by the Indians." His statement clearly betrayed an ignorance of

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[20]"Statement of Edmond Guerrier," February 9, 1869. Philip H. Sheridan Papers, Library of Congress. Microfilm, Reel 76.

[21]Wynkoop to Murphy, September 10, 1868, in Sen. Ex. Doc. 13, pp. 16-17.

the realities of what the tribesmen faced in 1868.[22]

The depredations among the Kansas settlements on the Saline and Solomon spawned similar activities elsewhere through August along the Kansas-Colorado frontier. In most cases, the Cheyennes were identified as the perpetrators. On August 12, even while the Solomon encounters took place, Cheyennes took guns and horses from a government contractor near Fort Dodge and stampeded stock from a Mexican train near Pawnee Fork. Such incidents around the post increased all through August, and the commander complained of not having sufficient cavalry at hand to respond. Farther west, on the 19th warriors struck a party of woodchoppers, killing three and driving off their animals. More livestock raids and killings occurred on the 21st near Pond City. On the 22nd, Indians chased away more livestock at Sheridan City, and the next day attacked the stage to Cheyenne Wells. On the 23rd, between Pond Creek and Lake Station, more warriors struck the Denver stage, and on the same another man, mortally wounded, was brought into Fort Wallace. Four days later, 250 Indians challenged an army train, forcing the officer in charge to turnabout and return to Big Springs. And the commanding officer at Fort Lyon, Colorado, reported several incidents of Indians running off stock, attacking stagecoaches and ranches, and destroying wagon trains along the Santa Fe Trail. The warriors, identified as Cheyennes, told William Bent that they were on the warpath. Colorado territorial officials

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[22]This interpretation for the raiding in Kansas in the summer of 1868 is adapted from a thesis expressed by C.A. Weslager for the Delaware Indians in *The Delaware Indians: A History* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1972), p. 230, and used in regard to the Northern Cheyenne Indians in Ramon Powers, "The Northern Cheyenne Trek Through Western Kansas in 1878: Frontiersmen, Indians and Cultural Conflict," *The Trail Guide*, 17 (September, December, 1972), pp. 10-11, 31-32. Sheridan's quote is from Sheridan to Sherman, September 26, 1868. Clark Collection, Box No. C-46, Folder 1, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Library.

meantime reported conditions getting out of hand with one man killed near Lake Station, and a stage attacked near Cheyenne Wells. A panicky acting governor there reported Arapahos on the warpath and asked that he be permitted to draw troops from Fort Reynolds while he organized volunteer units. Accounting for similar incidents, Sheridan's officers revealed that by the end of August 35 citizens had been killed and 9 had been wounded. Livestock stolen totaled nearly 800 animals, while eight homes and two wagon trains had been destroyed. Included among the fatalities was a prominent scout, William Comstock, part of an intelligence-gathering system organized by the general. He had been shot point blank near the village of Dog Soldiers on the headwaters of the Solomon; his partner, Sharp Grover, had been wounded in the attack and narrowly escaped being killed.[23]

Of course, most attention remained focused on the Saline and Solomon raids, and Agent Wynkoop sought to learn from his charges the extent of their involvement and against whom, directly, blame should be assessed. On August 19 at Fort Larned, he therefore interviewed Little Rock, the Cheyenne chief whom he had earlier asked to find out about the events and their

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[23]"List of murders, outrages, and depredations," p. 3; Captain William H. Penrose to AAG, District of the Upper Arkansas, August 30, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part V, Entry 2 (Fort Lyon); Major Henry Douglas, Third Infantry, to AAAG, District of the Upper Arkansas, August 20, 1868, copy in Walter S. Campbell Collection, Box 120, Folder 3. Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma Library; Douglas to AAAG, District of the Upper Arkansas, August 22, 1868, in ibid.; Douglas to AAAG, District of the Upper Arkansas, August 24, 1868, in ibid.; "Report of Lieutenant General W.T. Sherman," November 1, 1868, in *Report of the Secretary of War, 1868* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1869), p. 335 (hereafter referred to as Sherman's Report, 1868); "Tabular statement of murders, outrages, robberies, and depredations committed by Indians in department of the Missouri and Northern Texas in 1868 and 1869, (exclusive of military engagements,) and officially reported to headquarters department of the Missouri," in *Report of the Secretary of War, 1869* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1869), p. 53; Mrs. Frank C. Montgomery, "Fort Wallace and Its Relation to the Frontier," *Kansas Historical Collections*, 17 (1926-1928), pp. 25-26; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, p. 295.

perpetrators. Through an interpreter Little Rock related the following details:

> This war party of Cheyennes which left the camps of these tribes above the forks of Walnut creek about the 2d and 3d of August went out against the Pawnees, crossed the Smoky Hill about Fort Hays, and thence proceeded to the Saline. . . . There were 10 lodges of Sioux in the Cheyenne camp when this war party left, and about 20 men of them, and 4 Arapahoes, accompanied the party. The Cheyennes numbered about 200; nearly all the young men of the village went; Little Raven's son was one of the four Arapahoes. When the party reached the Saline they turned down the stream, with the exception of about 20, who, being fearful of depredations being committed against the whites by the party going in the direction of the settlement, kept on north towards the Pawnees. The main party continued down the Saline until they came in sight of the settlement; they then camped there. A Cheyenne named Oh-e-ah-mohe-a, brother of White Antelope, who was killed at Sand Creek, and another named Red Nose, proceeded to the first house; they afterwards returned to the camp and with them [brought] a woman captive. The main party was surprised at this action, and forcibly took possession of her, and returned her to her house. The two Indians had outraged the woman before they brought her to the camp. After the outrage had been committed, the parties left the Saline and went north towards the settlements of the south fork of the Solomon, where they were kindly received and fed by the white people. They left the settlements on the south fork, and proceeded towards the settlements on the north forks. When in sight of these settlements they came

upon a body of armed settlers, who fired upon them; they avoided the party, went round them, and approached a house some distance off. In the vicinity of the house they came upon a white man alone, upon the prairie; "Big Head's" son rode at him and knocked him down with a club. The Indian who had committed the outrage upon the white woman, known as White Antelope's brother, then fired upon the white man without effect, while the third Indian rode up and killed him. Soon after they killed a white man, and, close by, a woman--all in the same settlement.

At the time these people were killed, the party was divided in feeling, the majority being opposed to any outrages being committed; but finding it useless to contend against these outrages being committed without bringing on a strife among themselves, they gave way, and all went in together. They then went to another house in the same settlement, and there killed two men, and took two little girls prisoners; this on the same day. After committing the last outrage the party turned south, towards the Saline, where they came on a body of mounted troops; the troops immediately charged the Indians, and the pursuit was continued a long time. The Indians having the two children, their horses becoming fatigued, dropped the children without hurting them. Soon after the children were dropped the pursuit ceased; but the Indians continued on up the Saline. A portion of the Indians afterwards returned to look for the children, but were unable to find them. After they had proceeded some distance up the Saline the party divided, the majority going north, towards the settlements on the Solomon, but 30 of them

started towards their village, supposed to be some distance northwest of Fort Larned. Another small party returned to Black Kettle's village. . . .[24]

Little Rock told Wynkoop that many of his people "do not wish to be punished for the bad acts of those who are guilty." The chief agreed to go to his people and to try and deliver up the principal perpetrators--Oh-e-ah-mohe-a (White Antelope's brother),Tall Wolf (Medicine Arrow's son), Red Nose, Porcupine Bear (Big Nose's son), and Bear that Goes Ahead (Sand Hill's brother). "Tell them," said Wynkoop, "that I think complying with my demand is the only thing that will save their entire nation from a long and destructive war." Little Rock replied that he would work for the his people's welfare, but "if the chiefs and headmen refuse to comply with your demands, I want to know if I can come with my wife and children . . . and place myself and them under your protection," a request to which Wynkoop acceded.[25]

The cumulative effect of the outbreak and collateral incidents also prompted calls for protection from white residents. Land Office officials in Junction City proposed erecting posts along the Solomon and Republican rivers, while Governor Crawford asked for 20,000 rounds of ammunition so that settlers could protect themselves. He also appealed to the president for permission to raise volunteers in his state. The commanding officer of Fort Zarah, meantime, requested two mountain Howitzers with sufficient ammunition "in view of anticipated Indian

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[24]"Report of an interview between Colonel E.W. Wynkoop, United States Indian agent, and Little Rock, a Cheyenne chief, held at Fort Larned, Kansas, August 19, 1868, in the present of Lieutenant S.M. Robbins, 7th United States cavalry, John S. Smith, United States Indian interpreter, and James Morrison, scout for Indian agency." Sen. Ex. Doc. 13, pp.19-21.

[25]Ibid., p. 21

troubles."[26] While many of the circumstances affecting these latter encounters were unfolding, Sheridan left Fort Leavenworth to assess the conditions in his department. Arriving at Fort Harker on August 20, the general, dismayed over the issuance of arms to the Indians, met Agent Wynkoop, who expressed perplexity over the outbreak and advanced the belief that Northern Sioux influence possibly accounted for the disturbances. In 1868, the Teton Sioux and Northern Cheyennes had managed to rid the army and settlers from the Powder River country in present Wyoming, and Wynkoop believed that news of this success was being spread among his own charges so that like effects might be achieved in the Smoky Hill River country. Wynkoop impressed on Sheridan that not all of the Cheyennes were guilty of the violence, and the officer promised to protect Little Rock's people. Later, at Fort Dodge, Sheridan learned that most of the Arapahos had not been involved in the outbreak. He met with Arapaho leaders, including Little Raven, and promised to support them through the winter if they surrendered, a stipulation to which they assented (and later ignored).[27] Nevertheless, anxious to quell the disturbances and reassure settlers, Sheridan took action, writing Governor Crawford that "I will at once order the Cheyennes, Arapahoes and Kiowas out of your state and into their reservations and will compel them to go by force. We will not cease our efforts until the perpetrators of the Solomon massacre

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[26]J.W. McClure and G.D. Houston, to Sherman, August 17, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 3; Crawford to Sheridan, August 19, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 2; First Lieutenant August Kaiser, Third Infantry, to First Lieutenant Edward A. Belger, Third Infantry, AAAG, District of the Upper Arkansas, August 24, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 2.

[27]Sheridan to Sherman, September 26, 1868. Clark Collection, Box No. C-46, Folder 1, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Library; Sheridan's report, September 20, 1868, p. 344; Hutton, *Phil Sheridan and His Army*, pp. 41, 43. Sherman also embraced the view that the outbreak on the Saline and Solomon was inspired by the success of the northern Indians in closing the Bozeman Trail forts in Wyoming. Sherman's Report, 1868, p. 335.

are delivered up for punishment."[28]

Meantime, the army had not been immobile during the spate of incidents in the department during the summer of 1868. From his headquarters at Fort Gibson, Indian Territory, Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson in June commanded an expedition to research the defensive needs of the territory. Accompanied by a small party of officers and Tenth cavalrymen, Grierson proceeded to Fort Arbuckle, then west to the abandoned Fort Cobb, en route scouting a location for a new post near the Wichita Mountains. The trip was without incident, and the troops returned to Fort Gibson within two weeks. Farther north, troops responded to the growing turbulence among the Indians in the District of the Upper Arkansas. From Fort Larned, Lieutenant Colonel Sully reported 300 lodges of Kiowas and Comanches, 200 of Arapahos, and 60 of Kiowa Apaches camped near the post, with 275 lodges of Cheyennes but forty miles away. Many of the Kiowas and Comanches expressed complaints over their agent, their condition, and the terms of the treaty that would send them below the Arkansas and the Kansas border.[29] The Cheyennes, as mentioned, were distressed over their non-receipt of arms and ammunition following their raid on the Kaws, and directives to district commanders highlighted the need "to act strictly on the defensive and only attack such parties as commit depredations."[30] Indians and even citizens having protested the practice of soldiers shooting at them every time they

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[28]Quoted in Montgomery, "Fort Wallace and Its Relation to the Frontier," pp. 24-25.

[29]Grierson to AAG, Department of the Missouri, July 4, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 2; Sully to AAG, Department of the Missouri, July 12, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 4.

[30]Belger to commanding officers of Fort Hays, Camp End of Track, Detachment Tenth Cavalry, Monument Station, and Fort Wallace. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633.

approached a water tank along the railroad line, Sully ordered his officers to instill in their men the need to exercise caution, "and not fire at everything they see."[31] A major concern for Sully were the Kiowa Indians hanging around Fort Zarah who had a habit of stopping trains over the Santa Fe Trail and forcibly taking their contents. Sully talked with their leaders and, as usual, they blamed the infractions on young boys and old men. "I don't trust these Kiowas at all," reported Sully. "I think they are the meanest Indians on the plains."[32]

After the raiding began on the Saline and Solomon, Sully put his scattered force on alert then journeyed to Fort Harker to appraise the situation. On the 13th he sent fifty Seventh cavalrymen under Captain Frederick W. Benteen north to try and identify the tribe responsible for the attacks. It was Benteen who later pursued the warriors along the Solomon. Within days, Sully had amassed nine companies north of Harker intent on quelling the trouble and learning the identity of the perpetrators.[33] On the 22nd, Colonel Sully issued the following circular respecting the raids:

> Hostilities having broken out with the Cheyennes and other Indian tribes, Commanders of Posts and Detachments in this District are cautioned to be vigilant and on the alert at all times to prevent them from committing

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[31]Belger to commanding officers at Fort Hays, Monument Station, and Camp at End of Track, July 16, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633.

[32]Sully to AAG, Department of the Missouri, August 13, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 4.

[33]Sully to Commanding Officer, Fort Wallace, August 12, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633; Sully to Commanding Officer, Fort Hays, August 12, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633; Sully to AAG, Department of the Missouri, August 13, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 4; Sully to Sheridan, August 16, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 4.

> depredations in the vicinity of their commands. They will caution all trains and parties passing through to remain at the different posts, until they have a sufficient force to protect themselves; or if they will venture out, they do so at their own risk.[34]

To reassure settlers, Sully sent units of the Third Infantry to escort a train of provisions and to erect blockhouses in the areas of the Saline and Solomon, while the commander of the District of Kansas prepared to build one on the Republican River.[35] Companies of the Tenth Cavalry were sent to patrol the ravaged countryside with orders for detachments to move constantly and to "attack any Indians they may meet, except the Pawnees." Seventh Cavalry companies were ordered to Fort Larned from Forts Reynolds and Lyon, Colorado. Other units of the regiment under Major Joel Elliott were dispatched to Pawnee Fork and Fort Larned to scout the country around Walnut Creek and the Arkansas, with like instructions "to attack all Indians they may see." Seventh cavalrymen posted along the line between Forts Harker and Zarah were cautioned not to interfere with Kiowas or Comanches, but to likewise attack those belonging to "hostile bands." At water tanks along the railroad, guards were increased to three men; special orders required them to furnish their dugouts with a barrel of water each, along with extra supplies of

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[34]Circular, Headquarters, District of the Upper Arkansas, August 22, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633.

[35]Two blockhouses were built, one at Spillman Creek at the forks of the Solomon, the other on the Republican, each guarded by twenty men of the Thirty-eighth Infantry. Special Orders No. 121, Headquarters, District of the Upper Arkansas, August 21, 1868. NA, RG 393, Entry 2633; Special Orders No. 123, Headquarters, District of the Upper Arkansas, August 25, 1868. NA, RG 393, Entry 2633.

hardtack and ammunition.[36]

Late in August, Congress finally ratified the Medicine Lodge Treaty with the Cheyennes and Arapahos of October 28, 1867. Despite the fact that ratification had occurred too late to provide adequately for the tribesmen, as had been promised them during the proceedings, government officials instantly seized on elements of the accord to show how its provisions had been abused by the Indians. Article 11, in particular, outlawed such behavior as had occurred on the Saline and Solomon, with specific regard to attacking settlers at home, molesting wagon trains and livestock, taking white women or children, and killing and scalping white men.[37] This interpretation coincided with the swift ascendancy of the War Department in dealing with the tribes. Already, Sherman and Sheridan had decreed the Indians' removal below the Kansas line with orders to pursue and kill them, if necessary, in accomplishing that objective. In view of the army philosophy of holding accountable the entire tribe for the sins of the few, the position of the Indian office now became one of trying to protect those people who had not been involved in the depredations. Acting Commissioner Charles E. Mix wrote:

> If General Sherman's orders to General Sheridan would not result in the killing of

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[36]Belger to First Lieutenant Joseph Hale, Third Infantry, August 24, 1868; Belger to Commanding Officer, Fort Dodge, August 24, 1868; Belger to Commanding Office, Fort Lyon, August 24, 1868; Belger to Commanding Officer, Company C, Tenth Cavalry, August 24, 1868; Belger to Elliott, August 24, 1868; Belger to Elliott, August 25, 1868; Special Orders No. 117, Headquarters, District of the Upper Arkansas, August 12, 1868; Special Orders No. 119, Headquarters, District of the Upper Arkansas, August 15, 1868; Special Orders No. 121, Headquarters, District of the Upper Arkansas, August 21, 1868; Special Orders No. 122, August 22, 1868; Special Orders No. 125, August 25, 1868. All are in NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633.

[37]Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs Charles E. Mix to Acting Secretary of the Interior W.T Otto, September 7, 1868, in Sen. Ex. Doc. 13, p. 8; "Treaty with the Cheyenne and Arapaho, 1867," in Kappler, *Indian Affairs*, II (Treaties), 988.

> Indians who had had nothing to do with the depredations in question, it would be perfectly right to carry them out to the letter. Those who were engaged in the murders should be punished, and be taught a lesson not to be forgotten; but it would not be right to punish the innocent for acts not committed by them.[38]

On August 10, coincidentally as the raiding progressed along the Saline, General Sherman issued General Orders No. 4 respecting his responsibility for disbursements to the tribes under his oversight on the reservations designated by the peace commission and mandated by the Medicine Lodge Treaty. To manage the various tribes from the area of the Upper Missouri through the Indian Territory, Sherman appointed in each region army officers to oversee actual distribution of goods and purchases for the tribesmen. "I will use exclusively Military Agents," he wrote Secretary Browning, "simply because I have more faith in their manner of business. . . ."[39] Thus, effectually for the time being, the army was to administer Indian affairs with respect to the tribes in Sherman's division. With reference to the country "bounded east by the State of Arkansas, south by Texas, north by Kansas, and west by the one hundredth meridian," reserves specified for the Cheyennes, Arapahos, Kiowas, Comanches, and Kiowa Apaches, Sherman appointed Colonel William B. Hazen to supervise and control all issues and distribution of goods to the tribes. In accordance with prevailing opinions of transforming the people into husbandmen, purchases were to be limited to beef cattle, meat, grain, and bread, with sparing issues of coffee and sugar in extraordinary cases. The people would also receive clothing for their elderly and young, and seeds and tools for cultivating the earth. An 1855 West Point

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[38]Mix to Browning, August 22, 1868, in Sen. Ex. Doc. 13, pp. 9-10.

[39]Sherman to Browning, August 11, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 3.

graduate, Hazen had risen to the rank of major general of volunteers during the Civil War and had won numerous brevets for gallantry and meritorious service. In the postwar army he was colonel of the Thirty-eighth Infantry and considered a competent, if somewhat contentious, officer. His views on the Indian question, however, paralleled Sherman's own, and the general often called on him for such special posts. In compliance with his assignment, Superintendent of Indians Hazen established headquarters for the Southern Indian District at Fort Cobb, a formerly abandoned post in the Indian Territory, situated near the mouth of Pond Creek on the north side of the Washita River, near the present modern community of Anadarko, Oklahoma. In terms of his appointment *vis-a-vis* Indian matters, Hazen was directly responsible to Sherman, but for matters regarding army personnel he deferred to Sheridan, for whom he shared a mutual dislike.[40]

The depredations triggered by the explosion along the Saline and Solomon continued into September. On the 2nd, a small party of troops twelve miles from Fort Dodge on the Arkansas were set upon by warriors who nearly succeeded in killing them before they reached the post. Five days later, raiders made off with sixty-five animals at a hay camp near Fort Wallace, but a cavalry pursuit was fruitless. Over a fortnight, warriors killed two teamsters and assailed stagecoaches on the road between Wallace and the community of Sheridan. On September 8,

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[40]Appended to Sherman's report, November 1, 1868, pp. 340-41; Hutton, *Phil Sheridan and His Army*, pp. 42-43; Francis B. Heitman (comp.), *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army, from Its Organization, September 29, 1789, to March 2, 1903* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903), I, 517. Although a close friend of Sherman, Hazen became engaged in numerous controversies with other officers during his career and managed to offend elements of the military hierarchy in Washington. Despite this, he eventually became chief signal officer of the Army and won promotion to brigadier general. For his biography, see Marvin Kroeker, *Great Plains Command: William B. Hazen in the Frontier West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976). For Hazen's recollections of his appointment and of some of the surrounding controversies involving his performance, see William B. Hazen, "Some Corrections of 'Life on the Plains,'" *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, pp. 295-318.

Indians drove off stock from a ranch on the Purgatoire River near Fort Lyon, and a cavalry detail went in pursuit while foot soldiers protected area settlements. The horsemen, Company L of the Seventh Cavalry operating under Captain William H. Penrose, Third Infantry, cornered the warriors about thirty miles from the post and fought a hot engagement in which two soldiers and two Indians were killed. The pursuit continued until the warriors were lost in the distance, and Penrose returned to Lyon the next morning after a sojourn of about 120 miles.[41]

Together with the events surrounding the Saline and Solomon depredations, these scattered outbursts that arose throughout the District of the Upper Arkansas presently forced the issue with the Cheyennes and Arapahos. Through the better part of August, Sherman and Sheridan designed and refined a plan to drive the Indians onto the Medicine Lodge-designated lands below the Kansas boundary. The consequences for tribesmen disposed not to go was simple: they would be pursued and killed by the troops. The plan was not immediately enacted, however, delayed because Interior Department officials wanted provision made for those people who had nothing to do with the recent disturbances, an accommodation that Sherman and his officers firmly resisted. The army believed that because the Indians had neither curbed the guilty parties, nor turned them over to authorities as specified in the treaty, they, too, were as blameworthy and therefore worthy of punishment. Sherman acknowledged, however, that the

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[41]Douglas to Captain Henry Asbury, September 3, 1868. Manuscript, Records of the United States Army Commands, Selected Letters Received, 1878[sic]-1879, Department of Missouri (Washington: General Services Administration, The National Archives, 1949), p. 188 (copy in the Campbell Collection, Box 120, Folder No. 3. Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Library); Douglas to Captain Myles W. Keogh, Seventh Cavalry, September 2, 1868, in ibid., pp. 188-89; General Field Orders No. 1, Headquarters in the Field, District of the Upper Arkansas, September 4, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633; Penrose to AAAG, Department of the Missouri, September 10, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part V, Entry 2, Vol. I (Fort Lyon, Colorado); Montgomery, "Fort Wallace," p. 26.

strictures should apply only to the Cheyennes and Arapahos. His and Sheridan's plan would not impact the Kiowas, Comanches, and Kiowa Apaches, despite their own proclivities toward raiding in Texas and their frequent instigation of trouble with more sedimentary tribes around Fort Cobb, because they had not been shown to be responsible for the immediate raids in Kansas. Meantime, Sheridan arrived at Fort Dodge and began organizing an expedition to go after the Cheyennes and Arapahos. The prospect unsettled Wynkoop, who opined to Superintendent Murphy that "the probabilities are that if they strike any Indians at all it will be the wrong parties."[42] But Superintendent Murphy lined up with the army on the matter of the Cheyennes' and Arapahos' complicity in the disturbances:

> Their last annuities had scarcely been distributed to them before they go to war. . . . They have violently broken their treaty pledges, and until they voluntarily abandon the war-path, ask for peace, make full reparation, . . . [and] go and live on their reservation, . . . I would send them no annuities whatever, but would leave these Indians where they now are--in the hands of the military.[43]

Yet the peaceful Cheyennes and Arapahos, including Black Kettle's band, had long since headed into the Indian Territory to get far away from the mounting troubles in Kansas, most of which were committed by young men with ties to all the various bands and villages, along with core groups of Dog Soldiers. For the reasons cited, the parent villages unfortunately could never escape the onus of blame, and it became but a matter of time before this reality yielded tragic

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[42]Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, pp. 143-44; William H. Leckie, *The Military Conquest of the Southern Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), pp. 89-90; Wynkoop to Murphy, September 3, 1868, in Sen. Ex. Doc. 13, pp. 17-18.

[43]Murphy to Mix, September 29, 1868, in ibid., pp. 15-16.

results. Military strategy called for Sheridan to punish the offending peoples severely by means of total war techniques--aggressively instilling terror among noncombatant as well as combatant populations by any means possible, including indiscriminate destruction of their homes and property and rooting out and killing all warriors and others who might give opposition. The deaths of innocents--those women, children, and elderly, as well as those warriors who had nothing to do with the recent outrages--was something that could not be avoided during army attacks on sleeping villages, which was the standard procedure for total warfare on the plains. Moreover, the psychological element of total war meant that as the season turned colder the Indians might be subjected to such losses during unbearable climatic conditions; many innocents who survived such an attack would likely be thrown out into the cold to starve or die as the result of the vigorous and unrelenting army prosecution. It was this type of punitive winter offensive that Sherman and Sheridan conceived to prosecute the Cheyennes and Arapahos in retaliation for their destructive behavior during and since the Saline-Solomon depredations.

In preparation for such an offensive, Sheridan boosted his meager force of Seventh Cavalry, Third Infantry, and Thirty-eighth Infantry troops along the railroad line and the trails, bringing in seven companies of the Fifth Cavalry to serve in the Smoky Hill and Republican river country in support of the Tenth troopers already there. He arranged for his aide, Major George A. Forsyth, to recruit a company of fifty well-seasoned frontiersmen to patrol the railroad in western Kansas around Fort Wallace as something of a special mobile ranger detachment. In early September, as the different units consolidated, eight companies of the Seventh Cavalry and one of the Third Infantry took station at Fort Dodge, on the Arkansas, poised to go after the offending tribesmen, while four companies of the Tenth moved to Walnut Creek Crossing, along

the road between Dodge and Fort Hays to the north. Forsyth and his scouts roamed the country about Beaver Creek north of the Kansas Pacific line. All of these components watched for Indian trails; most reported signs indicating that the tribesmen had gone south of the Arkansas.[44] With that knowledge, Sheridan prepared to send Colonel Sully's command forth into the treaty lands to effectively chastise and punish the Cheyennes and Arapahos for their role or presumed complicity in the recent violence.

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[44]Sheridan's report, October 15, 1868, in *Report of the Secretary of War, 1868*, pp. 349-50; Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, pp. 145-47; Hutton, *Phil Sheridan and His Army*, p. 45.

Chapter Four: Movements and Strategies

Since inception of the major violence in August, the revised toll in General Sheridan's department had stood at 110 citizens killed, 13 women raped, and more than one thousand head of livestock stolen. In addition, much private property consisting of buildings, farm houses, stagecoaches, wagon trains, and rolling stock had been lost to raiding Indians. During numerous chases and skirmishes with the tribesmen, the troops had been largely unsuccessful in bringing them to bay, and the frustration weighed on Sheridan and his officers with pronounced effect. Still smarting over Colonel Sully's acquiescence in permitting the distribution of arms and ammunition to the Indians, the department commander nevertheless needed him to take direct action against them. Such was the basis of Sheridan's directive to Sully to go after the Cheyennes and Arapahos and deliver them a sound punishment for their crimes. Under prevailing army philosophy, those who were blameless would suffer no less that those culpable for the offenses for the simple reason that determining the guilty was deemed an impossible task and the fugitives regardless would be harbored and abetted by their people. Furthermore, Sheridan believed that moving Sully below the Arkansas, into the Indian Territory and toward their villages would divert the Cheyenne and Arapaho raiders operating in Kansas back to protect their homes and families.[1]

Guided by these assumptions, on the evening of September 7, with Sheridan present to

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[1]Sheridan to Governor Samuel J. Crawford, September 10, 1868. Governors' Correspondence--Crawford. Manuscript Division, Kansas State Historical Society, cited in Lonnie J. White, "General Sully's Expedition to the North Canadian, 1868," *Journal of the West*, 11 (January, 1972), p. 84; Hutton, *Phil Sheridan and His Army*, p. 49.

see them off, district commander Sully departed Fort Dodge with a command of more than five hundred men--nine companies (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, I, and K) of the Seventh Cavalry under Major Elliott plus one (Company F) of the Third Infantry and a mountain howitzer under Captain John H. Page, whose principal purpose was to furnish escort to thirty wagons under the command of Captain James M. Bell, the Seventh's regimental quartermaster.[2] The son of the famous painter, Thomas Sully, Alfred Sully had garnered much previous experience campaigning against Indians. An 1841 West Point graduate, Sully fought in the Mexican and Civil wars, winning brevets for his performance at Fair Oaks and Malvern Hill, Virginia, in the latter conflict. He was best known for an offensive against the Indians in the wake of the Minnesota outbreak that culminated in his destruction of a large Sioux village at Whitestone Hill, Dakota, in 1863.[3] Now, with Sheridan's concurrence, he forded the Arkansas and steered his column southwest toward villages reported to be forty miles away on the Cimarron. The soldiers, equipped with three days' rations in their haversacks, traveled some thirty miles that night, camping at 3 a.m. on a branch of Crooked Creek. On the 8th, with but a few hours sleep, the troops continued south, striking an Indian trail at 2 p.m. on Goose Creek and taking up the pursuit until dark.

There is little doubt that the warriors Sully subsequently encountered during his sojourn

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[2]Special Field Orders No. 4, Headquarters District of the Upper Arkansas (in the field), September 6, 1868; and Special Field Orders No. 5, Headquarters District of the Upper Arkansas (in the field), September 7, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633.

[3]Military data on Sully is in Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army*, I, 935-36. A brief biography is in Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), pp. 488-89, while a full-length treatment (though strangely devoid of substantive material regarding his 1868 campaign) is in Langdon Sully, *No Tears for the General: The Life of Alfred Sully, 1821-1879* (Palo Alto, Calif.: American West Publishing Company, 1974). For his earlier Indian campaigns, see Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, pp. 271-80, 308, 322-23, 332-37.

below the Arkansas were Cheyennes and Arapahos. Whereas George Bent years later identified them as Kiowas and Comanches, Sully's own scouts and interpreters--John S. Smith and Benjamin H. Clark, who knew well the Cheyennes and Arapahos--positively identified the warriors as Cheyennes, and in some cases as Dog Soldiers. Although certain groups of warriors might have included Kiowas and/or Comanches, it seems that the majority were most assuredly Cheyennes and Arapahos.[4] On September 9, following a delay while the supply train caught up, Sully marched thirty miles, then sent Major Elliott and four companies of the Seventh to follow the rain-obliterated trail toward the Cimarron, while he and the remaining units marched southwest five miles to Goose Creek to camp and await word from Elliott on the location of the Indians. "We have not seen any yet, since we started out," wrote an enlisted diarist, "but they cannot be very far ahead of us."[5] At 4 a.m. the next morning, Sully struck south, meeting Elliott's command at the Cimarron thirteen miles away. After a march of fourteen miles east down that stream, a force of warriors suddenly surrounded the advance scouts, and the colonel dispatched some cavalry forward to relieve them. During the ensuing skirmish, in which two warriors and a pony were killed, the tribesmen were driven away. The soldiers camped near the junction of Crooked Creek with the Cimarron. During the night, Indians attacked the troops and the train, but were quickly driven away. Next morning, September 11, as the soldiers pulled out of camp warriors swooped down on two straggling men of Captain George W. Yates's Company

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[4]Sully to AAG, Department of the Missouri, September 16, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 4; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, p. 293, 293n12.

[5]Winfield Scott Harvey, "Campaigning with Sheridan: A Farrier's Diary." Ed. By George H. Shirk. *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 37 (Spring, 1959), p. 74. A typescript of the original diary is in the Edward S. Godfrey Papers, Box 6, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

F, carrying them away and subsequently killing one and wounding the other, while capturing four horses. Cavalrymen composing the rear guard under Captain Louis M. Hamilton pursued the Indians several miles, forcing them to drop the wounded man before abandoning the chase.[6]

This incident was described by the scout, Ben Clark, in correspondence of 1904, and probably exemplifies the sporadic nature of the action experienced by Sully's men on this expedition. Clark stated that the two troopers, leading two officers' mounts, had been cut off by about 100 warriors as they prepared to catch up with the command:

> As soon as word reached Sully at the head of the column, he sent Capt. Keogh back with a company [apparently Hamilton's] to try to rescue the men. Before the rescuing party could reach the scene the Indians had too great a start to be overtaken and finally disappeared over the hills to the southwestward with the soldiers' horses, equipments, arms and the extra horses belonging to officers as well. It was at first supposed that they had both men still with them alive, but while Keogh was in full chase he came near riding over one of the soldiers who was lying in the tall grass. This soldier was alive but had had his arms taken from him and [was] shot off his horse, being shot clean through his body from the back. He said when he was shot the other man was still in his saddle. This incident still further delayed the pursuing party, which after chasing a mile or two further and searching over the prairie for the body of the other man without success returned

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[6]Sully to AAG, Department of the Missouri, September 16, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 4; Albert and Jennie Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry: Diaries and Letters of Albert and Jennie Barnitz, 1867-1868.* Ed. by Robert M. Utley (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), pp. 186, 189.

> to the command with the wounded man who had been placed in an ambulance. . . . In returning to the command some 200 Indians got between us . . . and the rear guard and we had a lively skirmish before getting to the train. We had the ambulance and wounded man with us all the while.[7]

After Sully's column proceeded another five miles, the warriors mounted yet another attack, and more or less harried the command all day. Deployed in skirmish formation, the soldiers fought the Indians, now numbering several hundred, for several hours. Sully later reported that his men killed and wounded at least eight warriors "and no doubt a great many more. We had to fight in the hills by detachments. Officers and men report having seen several more [Indians] . . . as having dropped from their horses."[8] Private Winfield Harvey noted that the warriors "did some very bold riding and what a sight it was to see them ride and shoot."[9] The colonel, marveling at the warriors' use of bugle calls to orchestrate their movements, reported the following observations of the action:

> The Indians were well armed, some with the latest patent inventions of firearms and seemed to be well supplied with ammunition, and were splendidly mounted,

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[7]Clark to Herbert Myrick, July 15, 1904. Myrick Collection, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California. Copy furnished by Bob Rea, Fort Supply Historic Site, Oklahoma Historical Society. An alternative account suggests it was Captain Alexander Hamilton's company that engaged the Indians. James M. Bell account, no date. Walter M. Camp Manuscripts, Box 2, Folder 1, Field Notes, Topics A-L. Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington. Copy in Notebook 4, No. 1, Kenneth Hammer Collection, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, Crow Agency, Montana.

[8]Sully to AAG, Department of the Missouri, September 16, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 4.

[9]"A Farrier's Diary," p. 74.

> much better than our Troops. I noticed one (1) squad of about one hundred (100) who drilled with the bugle. Their calls were different from ours, but yet the Indians understood them. The Guides assert that they were the Cheyenne Dog Soldiers. The Northern Arapahoes were there also. A half breed Arapahoe [scout] recognized one and talked with him.[10]

The Indians scattered as the command resumed its march southeast, but returned and attacked the rear guard of the column six miles before it reached Beaver River. Sully noted that they "were handsomely repulsed with considerable loss." The soldiers crossed the Beaver, bivouacking on the south side of the stream. During the night, warriors tried to stampede the animals. Sully's troops, posted beneath the wagons, responded quickly and repulsed them without casualty. Bell remembered that the warriors were "well armed, but still used bows and arrows a good deal."[11]

As the column passed south along the Beaver on September 12, warriors followed, striking again at about noon, this time near Kiowa Creek, twelve miles from the troops' crossing point. Here, at about 11 a.m., a major skirmish took place, with Sully deploying eight of the cavalry companies under Elliott and the Third Infantry company under Captain Page. Captain Barnitz reported that "the Indians appeared in force, in our front, and made a vigorous and determined charge on the company which had the advance, but were repulsed by a volley at close range."[12] Exchanging fire with the warriors, the soldiers advanced steadily, finally driving them

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[10]Sully to AAG, Department of the Missouri, September 16, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 4.

[11]Ibid.; James M. Bell account. See also the account of Captain Albert Barnitz in *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 186.

[12]Ibid., p. 187.

in all directions with the howitzer. One soldier remarked that "we had fun for about two hours, killing quite a number of them."[13] After going fifteen miles further, the command camped for the night. On the 13th, they proceeded southeast along the Beaver to Wolf Creek, twenty-three miles away, with the rear guard under the persistent long-range fire of warriors for much of the day. Believing he was gaining on the villages, Sully also grew convinced that the Indians were creating blind lodgepole trails for leading his men into the surrounding sand hills. He explained:

> Not having anyone with me acquainted with the country, we crossed the Middle River [Wolf Creek] and got into the trap the Indians laid for us. They occupied all the hills, and were dismounted. The wagon train which we had to keep with us, on account of the broken country, and vigorous attack of the Indians, could not proceed. However, by dismounting my men, I drove the Indians through the heavy sands from hill to hill and withdrew the train from the ambuscade with very little loss and camped for the night on the Canadian near its junction with Middle River.[14]

One man described this country as being composed of "the worst sandhills you ever saw." A soldier of Company F, Seventh Cavalry, was killed in this fight before the command turned north, marched three miles to recross Wolf Creek, and bivouacked on Beaver

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[13]*Leavenworth Times and Conservative*, September 24, 1868, as cited in White, "General Sully's Expedition," p. 89.

[14]Sully to AAG, Department of the Missouri, September 16, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 4. See also, Harvey, "A Farrier's Diary," p. 75.

Creek.[15] On September 14, the day after this encounter, a weary Sully reassessed his situation. The families, he decided, had escaped beyond his reach. Furthermore, he was satisfied that he could no longer pursue the tribesmen through such broken country with a wagon train under circumstances where "the Indians had every advantage of attacking, or retreating, at their option, [and continuing] would only result in wearing out my stock. . . ."[16] Simply put, the sand hills had defeated him. Sully concluded to start home to obtain supplies and ammunition and additional troops to protect his train, then to outfit another column to act in concert with his own. The decision did not sit well with all of his officers, Captain Barnitz included:

> I . . . was quite mortified to find that it was determined to retreat 'for rations' as it was said--though we had enough to last us till the end of this month--of everything except forage, and I was very sanguine, from all indications, that within two or three days more we should have overhauled their villages, and ended the campaign--whereas to retire then was only to protract the matter and

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[15]*Leavenworth Times and Conservative*, September 24, 1868, as cited in White, "General Sully's Expedition," p. 89; Harvey, "A Farrier's Diary," p. 75; Communication with Bob Rea, Fort Supply Historic Site, Oklahoma, December, 2000. Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 187. Of this lively action, Barnitz wrote: "I was directed to advance directly through the sand hills, and had forded a stream and gone forward some distance, when "F" Troop was directed to cross and advance as skirmishers, dismounted. I was moving forward a skirmish line mounted with a platoon in reserve, and had dislodged the Indians from several hills in my front, when they at length, about a hundred of them, occupied a hill on my right, and a little to my rear, and made a stand and succeeded in killing the man [of Company F] . . . , besides inflicting some other damage, until a cross fire from my skirmishers hurried them out of their position. Ibid., p. 190.

[16]Ibid. The site of Sully's fight of September 13 is east of the present Fort Supply Lake (reservoir), about three miles southeast of the present Fort Supply Historic Site. Bob Rea, "The Washita Trail: The Seventh U.S. Cavalry's Route of March to and from the Battle of the Washita," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 76 (Fall, 1998), pp. 248-49.

render it more tedious as well as difficult.[17]

Sully's command passed over the Beaver and journeyed twenty miles, the Indians still harassing his flanks before withdrawing. The troops encamped on Buffalo Creek. In a view somewhat contrary to that of Captain Barnitz, Private Harvey recorded his observations of the day: "The Indians followed us until about noon, thinking they had given us a big thrashing, but it was not the case. We were out of rations and could not help ourselves."[18]

On September 15, a cloudy blustery day, the colonel turned his men north, fording the Cimarron and reaching Bluff Creek in Kansas after covering thirty-two miles through sage-covered sand hills and "an exceedingly broken red earth country" abounding with so many buffalo that the soldiers killed scores of them. From that point, Sully forwarded his sick and wounded, along with a broken ambulance and his empty supply wagons, on to Fort Dodge, the latter to be reprovisioned so he might resume his campaign.[19] "There is no doubt," he declared,

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[17]Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 196. Francis M. Gibson, then second lieutenant, Company A, Seventh Cavalry, recalled: "Had our attack been made with as much vigor and determination as the Indians displayed in their resistance, the hills could easily have been taken by the dismounted cavalry, and, leaving the infantry to guard the train, we could have pushed on to their villages, which, we afterwards learned, were but a short distance beyond, and the Washita campaign would in all probability never have been necessary. . . . General Sully for some reason did not consider this plan feasible. . . . We had quite an important victory within easy reach had we chosen to seize it." "The Battle of the Washita." Ed. by Edward S. Luce, in John M. Carroll (comp.), *Washita!* Bryan, Texas: Privately printed, 1978), pp. 5-6. In fact, the principal concentration of Cheyennes and Arapahos was in the vicinity of the Antelope Hills and the South Canadian, where the people of Black Kettle and Little Raven had been joined by some Lakotas from the north. Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, I, 594.

[18]Harvey, "A Farrier's Diary," p. 75.

[19]Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, pp. 187-88, 190-91; Sully to AAG, Department of the Missouri, September 16, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 4.

"that all of the Cheyennes and nearly all of the Arapahoes are engaged in this war. . . ."[20] He opined that the Kiowas and Comanches might soon join these Indians, and he urged "that we operate as soon as possible with force enough, not only to oppose the hostile Indians but to crush them."[21] Two columns of troops, he believed, would succeed where one could not, and "will keep those Indians moving and so uncomfortable that they will be glad to make peace on any terms."[22] Sully estimated that his campaign had resulted in killing at least twenty or thirty warriors and the same number wounded. "It is too much the custom to report a very large number of the enemy killed, but the above is far within the limits of what is supposed to be the actual loss." Disheartened over the meager results of his eight-day sojourn, Sully finally headed back to Fort Dodge, leaving the Seventh Cavalry companies under Elliott to patrol for Indians below the Arkansas.[23]

Sully's plan for a resupplied and rejuvenated campaign to prosecute the Indians did not materialize as rapidly as he had planned. It took time for infantry units stationed at the widely

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[20]Sully to AAG, Department of the Missouri, September 16, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 4.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Ibid.; Special Field Orders No. 6, Headquarters District of the Upper Arkansas (in the field), September 16, 1868, and Special Field Orders No. 7, Headquarters District of the Upper Arkansas (in the field), September 19, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633. In addition to the above-cited materials, for Sully's expedition see Record of Events of the Seventh Cavalry for the Year 1868, as compiled from official troop, squadron, regimental payrolls, and field returns, and presented in Carroll, *Washita!*, pp. 27-35; Gibson, "Battle of the Washita," in ibid., pp. 5-6; Sheridan's report, October 15, 1868, p. 350; Hutton, *Phil Sheridan and His Army*, pp. 48-49; Leckie, *Military Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 81-83; Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, p. 147; Stan Hoig, *Tribal Wars of the Southern Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), pp. 244-47; Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 318-20.

scattered Kansas stations to reach Fort Dodge, and by the time they did arrive any momentum Sully had hoped to salvage had long since vanished. From a military perspective, the campaign had been a failure. The Cheyennes, determined to prevent the soldiers from striking their homes and families, had forced Sully to withdraw when seemingly at their doorstep; their constant harrying of his command seems to have worn the soldiers down before any material gain could be achieved. On balance, Sheridan's hope of punishing the tribes for their depredations and for preventing recurrent raids in Kansas did not materialize. General Sherman did not mince words: "I think Sully made a botch of it on the Canadian," he told a colleague.[24] Sully drew criticism for having conducted his campaign from an army ambulance in which he traveled much of the time. Major Elliott wrote a friend: "I had the honor to command the cavalry on that expedition and if it was *fighting*, then Indian wars must be a huge joke." He cautioned the recipient of his remarks not to make them public because Sully "is an amiable fellow and I would not like to hurt his feelings."[25] Another critic was Edward S. Godfrey, then a first lieutenant with Sully's command. In 1927 he reminisced how the colonel in passing over the Arkansas the evening of departing Fort Dodge had likened it to having "crossed the Rubicon," and, on deciding to retire after a week of mostly barren results, had given as his reason for ending the pursuit the "interminable" nature of the sand hills. Despite all the problems, maintained Godfrey, Sully "seemed perfectly

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[24]Sherman to Brigadier General Christopher C. Augur, September 28, 1868. Christopher C. Augur Papers, Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield. Cited in White, "General Sully's Expedition," p. 93.

[25]Elliott to Theodore R. Davis, October 31, 1868. Theodore R. Davis Collection, Manuscript Division, Kansas State Historical Society. Cited in White, "General Sully's Expedition," p. 93, and reproduced in "Sidelights on the Washita Fight," *The Westerners Brand Book*, 5 (December, 1948), pp. 57-58.

satisfied with the results of the expedition."[26]

For the army, about the only positive feature resulting from Sully's operation was his issuance, on September 26, of General Field Orders No. 3, which, based largely on his recent experience, broadcast procedures for dealing with the Indians while on campaign. It was a remarkable document, one of the few ever to offer prescriptions for combating warriors given their predilections in warfare and resulting from a trying, hard-fought, and frustrating--though perhaps all too brief--campaign. The orders addressed the warriors' strategy to "never attack except they have the advantage, and never to make a stand for resistance, except we are lucky enough to strike their villages; their plan will be to harass us in small parties, endeavoring to draw the troops from the direction in which they may be going, or to entice us to an unsuccessful pursuit, whereby they can break down our animals." Regarding the recent encounter in the sand hills, the orders warned officers to be on guard for trails that looked fresh, "for it is an old trick of the Indians to fasten Lodge poles to their War horses' saddles and then make a trail to lead you where they most wish you." The remainder of the order offered a carefully contemplated prescription, from recent hindsight, to assure success for future area field commands. The following selections afford rarely encountered insights into how field commands operated during the plains Indian campaigns of the 1860s:

> All commands should have an advance and a rear guard, the strength of the

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[26]Edward S. Godfrey, "Some Reminiscences, Including an Account of General Sully's Expedition Against the Southern Plains Indians, 1868," *The Cavalry Journal*, 36 (July, 1927), pp. 421-25, as cited in White, "General Sully's Expedition," pp. 94-95; Edward S. Godfrey, "Some Reminiscences, Including the Washita Battle, November 27, 1868," *The Cavalry Journal*, 37 (October, 1928), p. 481 (quote).

column and the nature of the country will regulate the number of men comprising these guards. . . . Should the country be broken, affording hiding places for the Indians to make a dash upon the column, or train of wagons, flankers should be thrown out "where danger may be apprehended," far enough to give the alarm in time. . . .

Should the command be a large one, it is always better to move in two columns, and should the troops have a wagon train to guard, the wagon train should march between these two columns, closed up into two or more lines, as the nature of the country will allow . . . in order to make the command as compact as possible.

Should there not be troops enough to form two columns, then an advanced and rear guard with flankers will be used. On the march, should they come to a difficult pass, or the crossing of a river, the advance guard will go ahead and occupy a prominent position so as they will have a good lookout. The right column of troops will then move over, then the wagons, and as soon as they get through the defiles they will close up as close as they can, followed by the left column of troops. The rear guard will occupy dangerous points in rear of the column, and as soon as it is again in motion, regain its proper position.

On going into camp, the advance guard, or a sufficient number of it, will be immediately thrown out in parties of three (3) to occupy the principal lookout

> points which would encircle one-half the camp. The column will then camp on the right and left of each other, leaving a space wide enough for the wagons to park, or corral [sic] between them. The rear guard on coming up will throw out pickets like the advance and so complete the circle around the camp. No animals will be allowed to graze beyond the circle of pickets, and the herds must always have with them mounted and armed guards. . . . After Retreat the mounted picket will be drawn in and a line of dismounted pickets thrown around the camp at a distance of a few hundred yards, taking care to occupy prominent points, if not too far from the camp. There will be three (3) men at each one of these posts, one of them at least, to be at all times awake, and on the alert. When, from the nature of the post they occupy, or when there is danger to be apprehended, these pickets will throw up a semi-circular rifle pit, just high enough to cover them in crouching down. After dark no fires will be allowed in camp when there is danger from Indians.[27]

It was this prescription that Colonel Sully hoped to operate under during his subsequent expedition. Meantime, while Sully's campaign had been afield, other events had taken place in Sheridan's department. On September 15, a company of Tenth Cavalry protecting the stage road between Fort Wallace and Denver came under attack along Sand Creek. The troops, commanded by Captain George W. Graham, drove the warriors off with reported casualties of eleven killed

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[27]General Field Orders No. 3, Headquarters District of the Upper Arkansas, in the Field, Fort Dodge, Kansas, September 26, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633.

and an unknown number wounded.[28] Two days later, the command of scouts under Major George A. Forsyth was attacked by at least 700 Cheyennes along the Arickaree fork of the Republican River, in eastern Colorado. Forsyth's small contingent dug in on a sandbar at midstream and managed to hold off the warriors, who mounted numerous charges against the men. Lieutenant Frederick H. Beecher, Third Infantry, and four of the scouts were killed in the engagement, while fifteen more were wounded. Forsyth himself endured two severe wounds. The men, constantly under siege, lived on horseflesh over the next week until troops of the Tenth Cavalry found and relieved them on September 25.[29]

Delays in forwarding the reinforcements Sully required to renew his offensive resulted in the commensurate loss of provisions for his command--the rations were consumed by his troops on patrol and those at Fort Dodge. With that, Sheridan and Sherman turned to a more contentious strategy, believing that if the offending tribes were to be adequately punished, a more potent strike force had to be readied for the job. Justification for such aggression lay in the Indians' abrogation of stipulations of the Medicine Lodge Treaty. "They have not restrained

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[28]Sheridan's report, October 15, 1868. Companies of the Tenth Cavalry had been operating regularly out of Fort Wallace, concentrating in the areas of the Smoky Hill and its tributaries, as well as of the Arkansas and its affluents. See "Tabular Statement of the marches, scouts and expeditions made by Detachment 10 U.S. Cavalry. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 1.

[29]Sheridan's report, October 15, 1868, p. 350. This engagement, known as the Battle of Beecher's Island, is recounted in context and detail in John H. Monnett, *The Battle of Beecher Island and the Indian War of 1867-1869* (Niwot, Colo.: University Press of Colorado, 1992). See also, David Dixon, *Hero of Beecher Island: The Life and Military Career of George A. Forsyth* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994). For overviews, see Leckie, *Military Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 75-80; Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, pp. 147-48; Hoig, *Tribal Wars of the Southern Plains*, pp. 248-52; Hutton, *Phil Sheridan and His Army*, pp. 46-48; Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 311-14; and Cyrus Townsend Brady, *Indian Fights and Fighters* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1904), pp. 72-122.

those who have [committed depredations], nor have they on demand given up the criminals as they agreed to do." Sherman had already complied with Sheridan's request for more men, sending six companies of the Twenty-seventh Infantry and two of the Second Cavalry under Lieutenant Colonel Luther P. Bradley to patrol the forks of the Republican--they had arrived there in time to take part in the rescue of Forsyth's command. Late in September, seven companies of the Fifth Cavalry under Major William B. Royall arrived at Fort Harker and were immediately dispatched to range the Beaver Creek country of northwestern Kansas, above the railroad (this stream was a tributary of the Republican and is not to be confused with the Beaver Creek of the Indian Territory, where Sully had recently maneuvered). The purpose of these units was to operate through the winter and "clean out all hostile Indians near to and between" the Platte and Smoky Hill overland roads. Deeming his total force still too small to contend with warriors that now possibly included those from the Kiowa and Comanche tribes, Sheridan, with Sherman's approval, called on the Governor of Kansas to raise 1200 cavalry for operations in his department.[30] Sherman's design, as he enjoined his department commander, was "to remove all Indian Agencies from the lines of the Railroad, and to establish them down on the Canadian, so that we may induce some Indians to go thither, compel others, and treat all others as hostile. . . . Until that is accomplished, peace with the Indians is impossible."[31]

Concerned over the inability of the troops to distinguish among what he considered the

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[30]Sherman to Inspector General, September 17, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 1601, Box 3 (first quote); Sherman to Sheridan, September 17, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 3; Sherman to Sheridan, September 17, 1868 (second quote). NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 3; Sheridan's report, October 15, 1868; Hutton, *Phil Sheridan and His Army*, pp. 49-50.

[31]Sherman to Sheridan, September 17, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 3.

"well-disposed" as opposed to "warlike" tribesmen, and doubtless hoping to assuage apprehensions of Interior Department officials that the army would attempt no such distinction, Sherman directed agents for the former people to bring them to Fort Cobb, where Hazen would superintend them. "It will simplify our game of war, already complicated enough, by removing them well away from the field of operations."[32] Hazen geared his efforts to stabilizing the Kiowas and Comanches who had not yet become involved in the escalating troubles. On September 19 and 20, Hazen and Sheridan counciled with the Kiowas and Comanches at Fort Larned, during which meetings those tribesmen agreed to join Hazen at Fort Cobb and avoid hostilities. Meantime, Sherman urged their agent to join Hazen there in distributing food and clothing to insure against their joining the Cheyennes and Arapahos. "The latter [peoples] should receive nothing," he concluded. "Now that they are at open war, I propose to give them enough of it to satisfy them to their hearts' content, and General Sheridan will not relax his efforts till the winter will put them at our mercy."[33] Believing that he would not reach Fort Cobb before the peaceful tribes arrived there, Hazen arranged for a surrogate to meet them. Captain Henry E. Alvord, Tenth Cavalry, appeared at the post in mid-October and began disbursing rations and counciling with leaders, pending Hazen's arrival.[34]

Between the time of the return of Sully's expedition and the resumption of major

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[32]Sherman to Secretary of War John M. Schofield, September 19, 1868, in Sen. Ex. Doc. 13, p. 22.

[33]Sherman to Schofield, September 26, 1868, in ibid., pp. 22-23; William B. Hazen, "Some Corrections to *My Life on the Plains*," in Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, pp. 300-301.

[34]Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 320-21; Leckie, *Military Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 90-91.

campaigning under the edicts laid down by Sherman and Sheridan, most of the Seventh Cavalry troops remained afield, ranging around the area of Bluff Creek for the balance of September seeking adequate grass and water for their stock while remaining poised for serious operations. "There is no news of where we are going to go," wrote an enlisted man at Fort Dodge on September 18. "Some say to winter quarters and some say on a campaign; not knowing which yet."[35] Three days later, however, rumor floating among the soldiers held that Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer was coming to assume command of the regiment. Based on the disappointment prevalent in the ranks in the wake of Sully's barren movement, that news likely sparked excitement. On October 1, moreover, Indian warriors struck boldly at troops bivouacked near Fort Dodge . Private Harvey described the assault:

> This morning at daybreak, the Indians came charging down on our camp. . . . I was sitting by the cook fire eating my breakfast, when I first saw them. They charged on some working men [soldiers] just about one-half mile from here, but the men ran and made their escape. One was badly wounded, afterward dying. Our company soon got into line and started after them on a dead run, sometimes coming very close to them, but our Company Commander, being an old card, would not let us charge them. There was a wagon train coming up the river at some seven miles from the post and the Indians seeing that they had a chance, charged it, capturing four wagons and killing two teamsters, [and] also wounding the wagon master, afterwards dying. After we drove them off south of the

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[35]Harvey, "A Farrier's Diary," p. 76. For troop dispositions for the remainder of September, see Record of Events of the Seventh Cavalry for the Year 1868, particularly that for Company G, Seventh Cavalry, in Carroll, *Washita!*, pp. 30-31.

> Arkansas, we fell back to camp, took dinner, drew one day's rations, [and] started again down to Big Coon Creek to meet another train on its road to this place. . . . No more of today.[36]

That same day more warriors, some reported to be Kiowas, struck Fort Zarah and several civilian wagon trains in its vicinity. Farther north, on the Solomon, warriors struck again. On October 9, near the town of Minneapolis, they killed four people, wounded one, and carried away twenty-three-year-old Mrs. Anna Belle Morgan, a homesteader's wife. The Indians were tentatively identified by Mrs. Morgan's husband as belonging to Black Kettle's band of Cheyennes. Regardless, Mrs. Morgan eventually landed in a village of Dog Soldiers,[37] who might, in reality, have been the perpetrators of the new Solomon raids.

Thus, Sully's fruitless campaign, instead of cowing the tribes, produced something of a backlash and brought a flurry of renewed raiding to the area. Partly inspired, at least, by the mild autumn weather in the region in 1868, at least seven incidents involving Indians attacks on citizens or trains occurred between October 2 and October 14.[38] One of these became especially

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[36]"A Farrier's Diary," pp. 77-78. See also, the official report of this attack in Douglas to AAAG, Department of the Missouri (Fort Hays, Kansas), October 4, 1868. Manuscript, Records of the United States Army Commands, Selected Letters Received, 1878[sic]-1879, Department of Missouri (Washington: General Services Administration, The National Archives, 1949), p. 188 (copy in the Campbell Collection, Box 120, Folder No. 3. Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Library).

[37]Sherman to Schofield, October 5, 1868. Sheridan Papers, Library of Congress, Reel 80; Lonnie J. White, "White Women Captives of Southern Plains Indians, 1866-1875," *Journal of the West*, 8 (July, 1969), pp. 337-38.

[38]Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, I, 594; "List of murders, outrages, and depredations committed by Indians from 3d August to 24th October, 1868, officially reported to headquarters department of the Missouri, in the field," in *Report of the Secretary of War, 1868*, p. 347.

noteworthy in light of later events. On the morning of Tuesday, October 6, a train of eight ox-drawn wagons departed Boggs Ranch en route to Fort Dodge. The party was in the charge of a Mr. Owens and consisted of ten men, one woman, and a boy. The woman was Clara Blinn, wife of Richard Blinn, who was also along, and the boy was their two-year-old child, Willie. On the next day, some ten miles east of the mouth of Sand Creek on the Arkansas, a force of seventy-five Indians attacked the train, wounding one man, stampeding the teams and making off with four of the wagons, and taking Mrs. Blinn and her son. All day and night the party fought the warriors, whose number gradually increased to around 200. On the afternoon of the 8th, most of the Indians drew off, forded the Arkansas River and camped on the south bank, only to return and renew the attack in the night. On Friday, the 9th, they attacked yet again, this time keeping the party under fire for four more days before crossing the river and heading southeast. On October 12, one of the besieged got away and reached Fort Lyon, where Captain Penrose dispatched troops to their relief. Cavalrymen scoured the countryside for evidence of Mrs. Blinn and her son. Approximately four miles from the scene of the late havoc they found a note from the woman "saying her & the child was well and that the Indians were going to keep them & asked her husband to do all he could for her." Owen identified the leader of the Indians as Satanta, the prominent Kiowa, thus establishing the presumed guilt of that tribe for the deed.[39]

These incidents impelled General Sheridan to move rapidly in his recourse. As strategy for fulfilling Sherman's objective of delivering the offending tribesmen a debilitating blow, With memories of Sully's impotent movement in mind, Sheridan invoked the concept of multiple

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[39]Penrose to AAAG, Department of the Missouri, Fort Harker, Kansas, October 15, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part V, Entry 2, Vol. 1 (Fort Lyon); Telegram, Penrose to Sheridan, October 15, 1868. Ibid.

military columns marching from several directions simultaneously to converge on a common area where the Indians were known to be located. Both Sherman and Sheridan saw winter--when the people were at their most vulnerable--as the perfect time for launching a punitive strike. Sheridan received authority for such a movement on October 9. By then, he believed, the warriors had mostly removed from the area north of the railroad, where troops were constantly patrolling, to the tract below the Arkansas River where their families congregated, reportedly in the area of the headwaters of the Red River, in the Texas panhandle, and south of the Antelope Hills in the Indian Territory. To converge forces on this area, Sheridan directed Colonel George W. Getty, commanding the Military District of New Mexico, to organize a column composed of six companies of the Third Cavalry, two of the Thirty-seventh Infantry, and four mountain howitzers to move east from Fort Bascom. This column, rationed until January, would range along the South Canadian (then Main Canadian) River. Another force from Fort Lyon, Colorado Territory, under Colonel Eugene Carr, composed of four companies of the Tenth Cavalry and one of the Seventh, would move east along the Arkansas, then maneuver south toward the Antelope Hills and the Red River. These two columns Sheridan regarded as "beaters in," driving any outlying tribesmen to the central village area. A third column constituted Sheridan's principal component. Consisting of troops of the Seventh Cavalry and the Nineteenth Kansas Volunteer Cavalry (to be raised by the governor of that state), it would proceed to a point near the junction of Beaver Creek and the North Canadian in the Indian Territory, establish a supply depot, and strike south, hitting the winter camps somewhere along the headwaters of the Washita River or further south in the area of the Sweetwater and Red rivers. There would be "no terms with the

hostile Indians except unconditional surrender."[40] The objective of the operation, according to Sheridan, was

> to strike the Indians a hard blow and force them on to the reservations set a part for them [by the Medicine Lodge Treaty], and if this could not be accomplished to show to the Indian that the winter season would not give him rest, and that he and his villages and stock could be destroyed; that he would have no security, winter or summer, except in obeying the laws of peace and humanity.[41]

On October 9, the day Sheridan received authority for the campaign from Sherman, he wired Kansas Governor Samuel J. Crawford, calling on him to provide a regiment of mounted volunteers for six months' service against the Indians. The directive called for the regiment to consist of the requisite officers (colonel, lieutenant colonel, three majors, twelve captains, and a like number each of first and second lieutenants) and non-commissioned officers (as specified in existing army regulations), and twelve companies of one hundred men each. The soldiers were to be recruited and mustered in at Topeka, and later to be mustered into the service of the United

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[40]Sheridan's report, November 1, 1869, in *Report of the Secretary of War, 1869* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1869) (hereafter cited as Sheridan's report, November 1, 1869), pp. 44-45; Sheridan to Sherman, September 28, 1868. Sheridan Papers, Library of Congress, Reel 80; Godfrey, "The Washita Battle," p. 484; Leckie, *Military Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 92-93; Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, pp. 149-50. This plan outline, written long after the fact, reflects what actually occurred. Sheridan originally planned to send Sully with eleven companies of the Seventh Cavalry and four companies of infantry toward the Wichita Mountains in southwestern Indian Territory, while sending four companies of the Tenth Cavalry and one of infantry to the Antelope Hills. Three companies of cavalry and one of infantry would patrol the stage line west of Fort Wallace. "I think this arrangement very good, and if the commanders do well there will be much damage done to the Indians." Sheridan to Sherman, September 23, 1868. Sheridan Papers, Library of Congress, Reel 80.

[41]Ibid., p. 45.

States, with appropriate arms, equipments, clothing, and horses provided at that time. Sheridan anticipated that these troops would be in the field by November 1.[42]

Another decision of Sheridan's was to be of historic moment. Following Sully's abortive campaign, the general determined to energize his command with the addition of Lieutenant Colonel George A.Custer, who was then waiting out a suspension from duty following his court-martial the previous year for actions connected with his service on Hancock's expedition. The gossip circulating within the ranks of the Seventh Cavalry had merit; Sheridan had formally requested the remission of the remainder of Custer's sentence, and on September 24 wired him to report for duty immediately. "Eleven companies of your regiment will move about the first of October against the hostile Indians from Medicine Lodge and towards the Wichita Mountains." Custer joined his command on October 11 at Bluff Creek. By coincidence, the troops' bivouac came under attack that very evening and the soldiers formed as skirmishers and eventually drove the warriors away without casualty on either side. Custer immediately sent out columns looking for the tribesmen. Over the next two weeks he led the ten companies of the Seventh in scouting operations between Bluff Creek and Medicine Lodge Creek and the environs of the Big Bend of the Arkansas, the regiment covering a distance of approximately 250 miles during the remainder of the month. These scouts proving fruitless, the command returned to Bluff Creek before moving to a point on the Arkansas a few miles southeast from Fort Dodge to await and prepare for Sheridan's major winter offensive against the tribes.[43]

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[42]Sheridan to Crawford, October 9, 1868. Sheridan Papers, Library of Congress, Reel 80.

[43]Sheridan's report, October 15, 1868, p. 351. "In compliance with Special Orders No. 19, Ex. 2, Headquarters Department of the Missouri (in the field) dated Fort Hays, Kan. Oct. 4th 1868, Brevet Major General George A. Custer, Lieut. Col. 7th U.S. Cavalry, will, upon receipt of

The entree of Custer into Sheridan's campaign plans brought an almost instant infusion of animation to the companies of the Seventh Cavalry, largely demoralized following Sully's tepid performance below the Arkansas. Custer, one of the brash young officers who had endeared himself to the public during the Civil War, had pursued the Cheyennes in Kansas, Nebraska, and Colorado during Hancock's expedition, which comprised his only experience with Indians. An 1861 West Point graduate, Custer rose meteorically during the Civil War through prowess in battle and inspirational leadership. He attained the rank of brigadier general of volunteers commanding Michigan troops, serving in nearly every campaign in the Virginia theater, including Yellow Tavern, Cedar Creek, and Appomattox, as well as those operations under Sheridan in the Shenandoah Valley in 1864-65. By war's end, promoted major general of volunteers, Custer commanded a division, and his continuous service had netted him numerous brevet appointments in both the regular and volunteer service.

Reduced in grade to captain in the regular army during the postwar reorganization of the army, Custer won appointment as lieutenant colonel of the newly formed Seventh Cavalry in 1866, and played no small part in readying the regiment for service on the plains. Hancock's

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this order, assume command of his regiment in the field." Special Field Orders No. 18, Headquarters District of the Upper Arkansas (in the field), October 17, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 3; Record of Events of the Seventh Cavalry for the Year 1868 in Carroll, *Washita!*, pp. 27-35; Gibson, "Battle of the Washita," in ibid., p. 9. Custer's description of the engagement on October 11 is in Elizabeth B. Custer, *Following the Guidon* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1890), pp. 6-8. Lieutenant Godfrey stated that Sully had requested Custer to take over command of the regiment during the upcoming campaign. "The Washita Battle," p. 1. Custer had been found guilty of leaving his command without permission, of illegal conduct in ordering his officers to shoot deserters, of abandoning two of his dead, and of excessively marching his troops. Jay Monaghan, *Custer: The Life of General George Armstrong Custer* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), pp. 300-03. For details, see, Lawrence A. Frost, *The Court-Martial of General George Armstrong Custer* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968).

campaign had been Custer's baptism of fire in the West. As stated, its aftermath represented the nadir of his military career and brought on his court-martial and dismissal from duty for a year. The incident reflected much of Custer's rash and impetuous nature that brought him either admiration or disdain from his associates. The press, which had captivated the country with his daring wartime persona, coupled with his own writings, contributed to bring him considerable fame, and by the time of his death eight years hence along Montana Territory's Little Big Horn River he was the country's most celebrated Indian fighter. His remarkable energy, coupled with enthusiastic demeanor and skilled perceptive faculties, gave Custer a reputation of accomplishment within military circles, and it was these qualities that Sheridan tapped to recharge his uninspired troops on the brink of opening the new campaign.[44]

Word among the officers of the Seventh held that the campaign would begin before the end of October. The movement would be in the direction of the Wichita Mountains, in the southwestern part of the Indian Territory, its purpose to disrupt the Cheyenne and Arapaho camps and keep them moving, to thus wear down the warriors' ponies until spring, when the army would bring all of its resources to bear against the tribes. But the schedule for starting troops south was postponed when anticipated supplies failed to reach Fort Dodge. Captain Barnitiz complained to his wife: "Rations and all manner of supplies sufficient to last a force of this size

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[44]Custer claimed that Sheridan told him concerning the upcoming campaign "I rely upon you in everything, and shall send you on this expedition without giving you any orders, leaving you to act entirely upon your judgment." Custer to Elizabeth, October 4, 1868, in Custer, *Following the Guidon*, pp. 11-12. Since his death at the Battle of the Little Big Horn in 1876, Custer has become one of the most dominant and controversial figures in American military history. The best biographies are: Utley, *Cavalier in Buckskin*; Louise Barnett, *Touched by Fire: The Life, Death, and Mythic Afterlife of George Armstrong Custer* (New York: Henry Holt, 1996); Jeffry D. Wert, *Custer: The Controversial Life of George Armstrong Custer* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996); and Monaghan, *Custer.*

for six months, at least, should have been stored at a post like Fort Dodge, at all times. . . . Now we see the result! An Expedition of some magnitude is indefinitely delayed. . . ."[45]

Elsewhere, however, other parts of Sheridan's command succeeded in meeting the Cheyennes, although the results of the engagements were inconclusive. On October 14, a command under Major William B. Royall, Fifth Cavalry, operating in the Republican River country had been attacked by Dog Soldiers on Prairie Dog Creek, losing two men killed and twenty-six horses stolen to the warriors. The day before, Colonel Eugene A. Carr, escorted by some 100 troopers of Companies H and I, Tenth Cavalry, under Captain Louis H. Carpenter, departed Fort Wallace to seek out and join the companies of the Fifth under Royall. On striking Beaver Creek, the soldiers and their supply wagons journeyed fifty miles northeast down its course searching for Royall without success. On October 18, the command was suddenly attacked by a body of several hundred Cheyennes--apparently many of the same ones who had besieged Forsyth's scouts at Beecher's Island three weeks earlier. The fighting raged for nearly six hours in intermittent long-range fashion before the troopers of the Tenth drove the warriors away, whereupon Carr, Carpenter, and the soldiers withdrew with minimal casualties back to Fort Wallace. On the 22nd, Carr, accompanied by fifty scouts, joined and took command of the seven companies of the Fifth at Buffalo Tank along the Kansas Pacific Railroad and set out to find the Dog Soldiers. Three days later the battle was joined near Beaver Creek, and over the next five days a running encounter occurred until the 27th, when the warriors withdrew and departed the area. Carr headed his exhausted men back to Wallace to ready them for further

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[45]Barnitz to wife Jennie, October 21, 1868. *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 200. See also, Barnitz to wife Jennie, October 28, 1868. Ibid., p. 202.

campaigning in accordance with Sheridan's plan to finally subjugate the Southern Cheyennes and Arapahos and their affiliates.[46]

[46]Sheridan's report, October 15, 1868, p. 352; Leckie, *Military Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 84-87; Brady, *Indian Fights and Fighters*, pp. 123-45.

Chapter 5: Camp Supply

By mid-October, as autumn continued to turn the plains into a drab and lifeless palette, the targeted tribes of Sheridan's upcoming campaign huddled their villages along the streams far below the Arkansas, hopeful that the period for army campaigning was at last over. Despite the seasonal changes, however, war parties composed largely of Cheyenne and Arapaho warriors from those camps continued to advantage themselves of the relatively mild days, moving with ease to strike unsuspecting civilian trains and wayfarers on the Kansas trails.[1] The troops at Fort Dodge, meantime, still awaiting provisions, spent the days preparing for its imminent departure south to chastise those people for their perceived cumulative wrongs, all of which had thus far occurred with impunity.[2]

On October 28, the companies of the Seventh Cavalry, which had lately combed the country along the Arkansas, took station below Fort Dodge at "Camp Sandy Forsyth," so named in honor of Major George A. Forsyth of Beecher's Island fame. Custer wrote Sheridan at the general's Fort Hays headquarters of his regiment's need for horses and arms, particularly Colt's revolvers, but concluded that "I can move on the proposed campaign in *good* condition in half an

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[1]As late as November 19 warriors (tribe not identified) killed a civilian and attempted to stampede cattle and mules near Fort Dodge before being run off by a detachment of Tenth Cavalry from the post. The tribesmen withdrew below the Arkansas after firing the grass on the north side, thereby preventing the soldiers from continuing the pursuit. Captain Andrew Sheridan to AAG, Department of the Missouri, Fort Hays, November 19, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 4.

[2]Custer intimated that the delay had less to do with supplies than it did purposefully awaiting the proper seasonal changes during which to go after the tribes. "[We planned] to defer our movement against the hostile tribes until the last traces of the fall season had disappeared, and winter in all its bitter force should be upon us."*My Life on the Plains*, pp. 204-206

hour's notice." "While I would be glad to see every man armed with a revolver," he added, "I would not delay a day to receive them. I find that in a charge against Indians the revolver often would be of great service when neither the sabre or carbine can be used." Custer also registered with Sheridan his concern over Sully's likely participation. "Sully did not say whether he was going with the expedition or not. If he goes I hope he will not break the 7th up in to two or more columns." "As to the campaign," he wrote, "I feel great confidence in being able to do something decisive."[3] Plans called for the command to depart for the Indian Territory on November 9.[4]

In 1868 the Seventh Cavalry was but two years old, having been organized at Fort Riley, Kansas, on authority of Congress granted in July, 1866, and designated by the War Department in November. Its colonel was Andrew J. Smith, on extended leave of absence through most of 1868, leaving Custer, its lieutenant colonel, to command on his return from suspension. There were three majors, Alfred Gibbs, in ill health and commanding Fort Harker; Joseph G. Tilford, also on leave of absence; and Joel Elliott, on duty with the regiment. Below them in rank were a host of captains and lieutenants, many with service credentials going back to the Mexican and Civil wars, but also some newly commissioned officers, West Point graduates or those

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[3]Custer to Sheridan, October 28, 1868. Sheridan Papers. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Microfilm, Roll 3.

[4]"The 7th U.S. Cavalry under command of Bvt. Maj. Genl. Geo. A. Custer and the Battalion of Infantry under command of Bvt. Maj. J.H. Page 3rd Infantry will be ready to move on the 9th inst., with these Headquarters, to a point on the north branch of the Canadian River south of here. At this point this column will be joined by the Regiment of Kansas Volunteers under Col. Crawford." General Field Orders No 6, Headquarters District of the Upper Arkansas, in the field, November 7, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633. Farrier Harvey stated that the departure was planned for the 10th. "A Farrier's Diary," p. 82.

commissioned from civil life. The enlisted corps consisted of both seasoned veterans as well as relatively recent enlistees. They came from all walks of life--former soldiers (including officers), sailors, shoemakers, tailors, teachers, carpenters, laborers, lawyers, farmers, and rough-hewn bowery types, foreign-born and domestic, educated and unlearned, temperate and bibulous. Throughout the army, their noncomissioned overseers were typically older, seasoned veterans with years of experience. They actually ran the company units; some were domineering brutes who tormented their charges to the extent that many were driven to desert. By the early fall of 1868, the various units of the Seventh had experienced baptisms of fire in twenty-two actions with Indians between the time of its organization until the start of the Washita expedition. As it readied for that campaign near Fort Dodge in late October and early November, its available components consisted of eleven companies--A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, K, and M (Company L remained stationed at Fort Lyon, Colorado Territory), totaling 29 officers and approximately 844 enlisted men. In addition, five companies of infantry (one of the Fifth, one of the Thirty-eighth, and three of the Third), under Captain John H. Page, Third Infantry,--plus the various civilian teamsters and white and Indian guides and scouts brought the total expedition to over 1700 personnel. (Moreover, the planned addition of the Nineteenth Kansas Volunteer Cavalry would raised that figure to around 2700.)[5]

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[5]For histories of the Seventh Regiment U.S. Cavalry, see, E.A. Garlington, "The Seventh Regiment of Cavalry," in Theophilus F. Rodenbough and William L. Haskin (eds.), *The Army of the United States: Historical Sketches of Staff and Line with Portraits of Generals-in-Chief* (Governors Island, New York: Military Service Institution of the United States, 1896), pp. 251-67; and Melbourne C. Chandler (comp.), *Of Garry Owen in Glory: The History of the Seventh United States Cavalry Regiment* (Annandale, Va.: The Turnpike Press, Inc., 1960). Regimental strength is calculated from Regimental Returns of the Seventh Cavalry, November, 1868. Microfilm copy in the collections of Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. For the composition of the army as a whole during the so-called "Indian wars" period, see Don Rickey,

While at Camp Forsyth, the Seventh, plagued by frequent and many desertions through its early history, received a large number of recruits that helped bring each company's strength to its authorized level.[6] The new arrivals required a commensurate number of new horses, arms, and equipment, and more ammunition was necessary for the upcoming movement, which was estimated to last for two months. Then the regiment began "refitting, reorganizing, and renovating." The units of the Seventh practiced cavalry drill and marksmanship (including on parties of Indians that occasionally harried the command); so important was the emphasis on accurate shooting that a special unit of sharpshooters was created, based on the results of twice-daily target practice, and composed of forty of the best marksmen in the regiment who were exempted from guard and picket duty and allowed to march together. The unit was headed by First Lieutenant William W. Cooke. (The unique character of the unit made wags in the regiment designate it as the "Corps d'Elite.")[7] The post commander of Fort Dodge turned over to the Seventh Cavalry 2000 Spencer carbine cartridges for use of the expedition. Officers received directives requiring them to familiarize themselves with the *Manual of Signals* and to train a number of enlisted men in those procedures. Medical Department personnel received

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Jr., *Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay: The Enlisted Soldier Fighting the Indian Wars* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963); Jack D. Foner, *The United States Soldier Between Two Wars: Army Life and Reforms, 1865-1898* (New York: Humanities Press, 1970); and Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[6]The Seventh received approximately 117 recruits who were distributed among the companies as follows: A, 17; B, 12; C, 9; D, 15; E, 7; F, 0; G, 13; H, 10; I, 10; K, 12; L (not present), 0; and M, 12. Information compiled from Neil C. Mangum (comp.), "Muster Roll 7th Cavalry, Washita Battle" (unpublished typescript, circa 1995).

[7]Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, pp. 206-08; Godfrey, "Washita Battle," pp. 482-83. Records indicate that the sharpshooter unit numbered but thirty men. Mangum, "Muster Roll."

instructions to join senior medical personnel at Fort Dodge; one of them, Assistant Surgeon George M. Sternberg, was appointed chief medical officer for the campaign. Custer recommended that the troops receive "an issue of vegetables" before getting underway. First Lieutenant Henry J. Nowlan was appointed acting commissary of subsistence for the expedition, while Captain James M. Bell, quartermaster officer of the regiment, oversaw preparations regarding clothing, equipment, and other supplies. Hundreds of wagons arrived for hauling supplies for building the supply base that Sheridan had directed be raised, as well as wagons to carry rations and provisions for the command. Oxen and mules were brought in to draw the wagons and ambulances.[8] The following quotas were assigned for these latter vehicles:

> One six mule and one four mule wagon (with their teamsters) for every Troop present with the regiment, one six mule wagon for the Band, one six mule and one four mule wagon for the Field and Staff, one six mule and one four mule wagon and seven ambulances for the Medical Department of the Regiment, two citizen Blacksmiths and tools necessary for them, and one wagon master will also be

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[8]Special Field Orders No. 29, Headquarters District of the Upper Arkansas, in the field, October 25, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633; Special Field Orders No. 19, Headquarters District of the Upper Arkansas, in the field, October 8, 1868; Special Field Orders No. 15, Headquarters District of the Upper Arkansas, in the field, October 4, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633; Custer to Sheridan, October 28, 1868. Sheridan Papers; Special Field Orders No. 5, Headquarters District of the Upper Arkansas, in the field, October 28, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633; General Field Orders No. 2, Headquarters District of the Upper Arkansas, September 25, 1868; Special Field Orders No. 33, Headquarters District of the Upper Arkansas, in the field, November 1, 1868; Special Field Orders No. 34, Headquarters District of the Upper Arkansas, in the field, November 6, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633; Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, pp. 204, 206; Custer, *Following the Guidon*, p. 8; Godfrey, "Washita Battle," pp. 482-83; Leckie, *Military Conquest of the Southern Plains*, p. 93.

retained by Bvt. Maj. Bell.[9]

For a cavalry regiment to perform properly, its horses had to be healthy and their maintenance in the Seventh during the regiment's preparations to go afield became an ongoing concern. Some of the mounts were jaded from past service, and Sheridan sent fifty to mount dismounted men and to replace those deemed unserviceable. Company farriers stayed busy shoeing all the regiment's horses. Sheridan also arranged for Custer to receive 550 of the Colt's Army revolvers requested for his men, but the colonel asked for more for the remainder of the regiment. "All the troop commanders are very anxious to have their men armed with them."[10] Custer also reassigned the horses to his companies based on their colors--"coloring the horses," it was called--and each company commander, based on rank and seniority, selected his choice of color. According to Lieutenant Godfrey, there were "four troops of bay horses, three sorrel, one each black, brown and gray, the band and trumpeters gray, and the eleventh troop the odds and ends of all colors. . . ."[11] The change did not sit well with all of the officers, and Captain Barnitz

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[9]Special Field Orders No. 29, Headquarters District of the Upper Arkansas, in the field, October 25, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633. This totals twenty-seven wagons, plus seven ambulances for the various units. In total, there were "nearly four hundred army wagons," with the majority designated for hauling materials to build the supply camp, as well as provisions for the expedition. Godfrey "Washita Battle," p. 483; Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, p. 210.

[10]Custer to Sheridan, undated and incomplete, but circa late October, 1868. Sheridan Papers. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Roll 3; Harvey, "A Farrier's Diary," p. 82. In addition, the farriers fashioned two extra horseshoes, precisely fitted to each animal's fore and hind hoofs, to be carried by their riders. Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, p. 206.

[11]"Washita Battle," p. 483. See also, Custer to Elizabeth, November 3, 1868. Custer, *Following the Guidon*, p. 14. This was the day that the "horse color" policy was implemented. See Harvey, "A Farrier's Diary," p. 81.

called Custer's order "foolish, unwarranted, [and] unjustifiable."[12]

Through Sheridan's offices, and evidently on the recommendation of Governor Crawford, arrangements had been made to recruit a dozen Osage Indians to serve as scouts for the command. Not only did the Osages know the country in which the troops would be operating, but they were on a constant war footing against the Cheyennes and Arapahos. At Camp Forsyth, orders directed the quartermaster to issue each a blouse and a cavalry hat and tassel, this in order "to distinguish these Indians from those of the Hostile tribes." The Osages, who "look as savage as the enemy we seek," were also slated to receive 800 rounds of cartridges for the campaign.[13] Winter clothing, including greatcoats, was also issued to the soldiers, which would serve them well when temperatures plummeted.[14] Officers and men spent considerable money at the post

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[12]Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 205; Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, pp. 208-09.

[13]Special Field Orders No. 34, Headquarters District of the Upper Arkansas, in the field, November 6, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633; *Army and Navy Journal*, January 2, 1869; Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, pp. 209-10; John Joseph Mathews, *The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), pp. 677-78; Leckie, *Military Conquest of the Southern Plains*, p. 93.

[14]The enlisted soldiers' basic clothing kit consisted of an issue pullover shirt, flannel drawers, woolen sack coat or cavalry shell jacket, 1861-pattern mounted greatcoat, and leather boots, together with buffalo overshoes, or commercially made vulcanized "arctics." In addition, fur or woolen caps and privately manufactured mittens and buffalo or other fur gauntlets were available. Each man wore an 1855-pattern leather saber belt with a pattern-1851 brass and german silver eagle belt plate, upon which was mounted a leather pistol holster, percussion cap pouch, pistol cartridge box, and carbine cartridge box. Weapons were the Model 1865 Spencer seven-shot repeating carbine, calibre .50 (carried by the soldier on a leather carbine sling with steel snaphook that fitted across his shoulder); the Model 1860 Colt's Army Revolver six-shooter, calibre .44 (some troopers apparently still carried the Model 1858 Remington revolver [New Model Army], calibre .44) ; and the Model 1858 Light Cavalry Saber. Officers normally wore higher quality clothing of different design and manufacture. On campaign, however, they wore and used many of these same clothing items and equipments, some of which were privately purchased or otherwise appropriated from issue stocks. For details of this and other campaign clothing and accouterments, see Douglas C. McChristian, *The U.S. Army in the West, 1870-1880:*

trader's store, where, one observer noted, prices rose rapidly, with blue flannel shirts and pairs of cotton socks commanding $9.00 and $1.00, respectively. Overall, throughout the first eleven days of November the command worked its way into fighting trim. "The halt, lame and the blind, both men and beasts, were culled out," remembered Lieutenant Gibson, "and everything not of vital value to a fighting column was eliminated."[15]

General Field Orders No. 6, directed that the Seventh Cavalry troops under Custer, along

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Uniforms, Weapons, and Equipment (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), pp. 12, 17-19, 20-21, 22, 23, 27-29, 32-33, 36, 69, 130, 132, 141, and *passim*. See also, Douglas D. Scott, "Firearms Identification of the Cartridge Cases from the Washita Battlefield" (unpublished manuscript dated November 8, 1996, National Park Service Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln, Nebraska), *passim*. Custer probably dressed similarly to his officers, and likely wore a fur coat and fur hat on the campaign; he evidently did not acquire the first of his well-known buckskin outfits until the late winter of 1869. Douglas C. McChristian, "Plainsman--or Showman? George A. Custer's Buckskins," *Military Collector and Historian*, 52 (Spring, 2000), p. 4. A Kansas volunteer, however, wrote in his diary on December 7 that Custer "wears a light colored hat and buckskin suit, the same as the scouts wear, with leather fringe on the seams or arms and legs." David L. Spotts, *Campaigning with Custer and the Nineteenth Kansas Volunteer Cavalry on the Washita Campaign, 1868-1869*. Ed. by Earl A. Brininstool (Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1928), p. 72.

[15]Gibson, "Battle of the Washita," p. 9. Other improvements to the clothing were effected after the troops reached Camp Supply and were described by Private John Ryan: "Some lined their overcoats with woolen blankets, while others made leggings from pieces of condemned government canvas. Although in those days the cavalry overcoat was very warm about a man's body, while sitting in the saddle his legs were very cold. By lining the skirt of the coat they were made very comfortable as far down as the knees, and then the leggings, in addition to the long cavalry boots, kept the men pretty warm. The government also issued us buffalo overshoes, made from buffalo skin, with the fur side in, and buckled up in front. They were very warm, but clumsy. The gloves that were issued to the enlisted men were made of the same material as the socks, with a thumb and forefinger to each glove, and although they were clumsy they were warm. We were provided with little shelter tents, . . . and just try to imagine a man getting out of his tent and putting his clothes on in the snow outside." John Ryan, *Ten Years with General Custer Among the American Indians*. Ed. by John M. Carroll (Bryan, Tex.: Privately printed, nd), pp. 47-48 (hereafter cited as *Ten Years*).

with Page's infantry battalion, be ready to move on November 9.[16] The expedition did not, however, get under way until three days later, when, Colonel Sully commanding,[17] the cavalry troops marched from Camp Sandy Forsyth with the wagons and their escort of five companies of Third infantrymen from Fort Dodge. The Kansas volunteers had not arrived. A correspondent described the appearance of the outfit:

> The regiment moved off in column of divisions or platoons, in which the horses were arranged by colors, as chestnuts, blacks, bays, greys, sorrels, browns, etc., presenting a magnificent appearance in the bright sunlight of a clear, cool morning, with just enough breeze to display the flags and guidons to the best advantage, and to waft down the column the strains of music from the Seventh Cavalry band, which was mounted on fine greys in the advance. . . . The band took occasion to remind us of "the girl we left behind us". . . .[18]

Fording the Arkansas, the cavalry troops filled their canteens, then bivouacked five miles south on Mulberry Creek, where the wagons and infantry joined them. Next morning, after a tedious stream crossing, the column took up the march south. "We are coming in to the Indian country, but have not seen any yet. . . ." penned Private Harvey. "If General Custer comes across them he

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[16]General Field Orders No. 6, Headquarters District of the Upper Arkansas, in the field, November 7, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633.

[17]Captain Andrew Sheridan, Third Infantry, to AAG, Department of the Missouri, November 12, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry a2601, Box 4.

[18]*Army and Navy Journal*, January 2, 1869.

will hurt some of them."[19] Much as in the manner prescribed in Sully's directive of September 26, two companies of cavalry rode in advance, with three more as flankers on each side, and two more companies serving as rear guard. The wagons advanced inside this moving perimeter, enclosed by a cattle herd, then encircled by the infantrymen, who, as the day wore on, gradually piled themselves into the wagons. As Godfrey remembered, "the leading troop on the flanks would march to the head of the train, halt and graze until the rear of the train had passed it, thus alternating so as to save dismounting and yet cover the flanks of the train. The advance guard of one day would be rear guard the next day."[20] Each night, the company wagons were placed at the front of each company's bivouac some thirty or forty feet apart and a picket rope tied from the rear wheels of one to those of the next. Along this line the horses were tied. The troops placed canvas covers on the animals to protect them from the cold, but they managed to reach back and tear them off each other.[21]

Sully issued explicit directions governing the daily responsibilities of the cavalry and

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[19]Harvey, "A Farrier's Diary," p. 83. At the time, officers were usually referred to by virtue of their highest past real or brevet rank. Although Custer's regular grade was lieutenant colonel, he was referred to in the custom of the day as "general," reflecting either his real highest volunteer army rank of major general or his regular army brevet rank of major general, both garnered during his Civil War service. Beyond quoted material and its use for background information about individuals, in this narrative officers will be referenced by their contemporary regular army rank.

[20]"Washita Battle," p. 485.Another member of the expedition remembered that "when the condition of the ground would allow, or wagon train traveled four abreast. The infantry was scattered among the wagons, and the cavalry marched in about six detachments, some of the companies on each side of the train, some as advance guard, and some as rear guard. With the wagons four deep, it, of course, shortened our flank, and rendered the wagon train less exposed to the attacks of Indians." Ryan, *Ten Years*, p. 46. See also, Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, pp. 210-11.

[21]Ryan, *Ten Years*, pp. 46-47.

infantry:

The Commanding Officer of the 7th Cavalry will detail, "every morning," one (1) Troop of his Regiment as advance guard and one (1) as rear guard. These troops on arriving in camp will act as pickets around the campground. While on picket duty they will have their horses by day and [be] dismounted at night. This advance and rear guard will be relieved every morning.

On breaking camp at the signal "Boots & Saddles," the advance guard for the day will move forward with the guides to the distance of a mile (more or less) according to the nature of the country to allow the supply train to string out of camp; then halt until ordered forward by the commander of the expedition. The rear guard will remain in camp until the command has moved out and comply with the instructions contained in *General Field Orders No. 3* from these Headquarters in regard to marches.

The Commanding Officer of the Infantry Battalion will detail (daily) one (1) company to accompany the ox train which will move out as promptly as possible every morning but not beyond the advance of the advance guard. The rest of the Battalion of Infantry will be distributed along the line of wagons so as to be able to repel an attack at any point.

The commanding officer of the Infantry Battalion will furnish a guard of (1/4 in number) of his command every evening on arriving in camp (six (6) [sic] Sentinels and two non-com-officers) as guard for these Headquarters and the rest of the guard to guard his camp and the supply train during the night. He will also

detail one (1) Commissioned Officer as Office of the Day, who will report to these Headquarters for instructions.

The Commanders of the troops detailed as an advance and rear guard, will also report for instructions, and the ranking officer will be ordered on duty during the day as Acting Field Officer of the Day.[22]

Over the following days, the command marched to Bluff Creek, then to Cavalry Creek and Bear Creek, and on south to the Cimarron, which was reached November 15. The troops experienced considerable difficulty "getting our heavily loaded wagons through the sands and soft bottom." The day was cold and snowy with high winds buffeting the column. That night the officers feasted on buffalo, brought down by Custer and the guides. (Cooke's sharpshooters also bagged a number of buffalo and pronghorns during the trip.)[23] Meantime, District Quartermaster Inman's ox train, which had been unable to keep up, pressed on south to the Beaver accompanied by a squadron of cavalry and three companies of infantry. On the 16th, the expedition covered twenty-five miles--the most of any day thus far--and reached Beaver River, moving east the next day, crossing Sully's old trail, and camping along that stream. On the 18th, as they wended along the valley of the Beaver, the column passed over the fresh trail of a war party headed north, surmised to be going to attack the Kaw or Osage villages. Here Sully refused Custer permission to go on the back trail with cavalry and attack the village from whence the warriors came, believing that the camp would be on alert and the troops would be ambushed. It was, concluded

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[22]General Field Orders No. 7, Headquarters District of the Upper Arkansas, November 12, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633.

[23]Conversely, Private Harvey noted on the 16th: "The buffalo are very scarce; we have killed none on this march yet." "A Farrier's Diary," p. 83.

Custer, "a fine opportunity neglected."[24] Later that afternoon, the column camped on the peninsula formed by Wolf Creek and Beaver River, about two and one-half miles above their confluence. Total distance marched since leaving the Arkansas was approximately 110 miles. Here on the floodplain the troops stopped and began work raising the cantonment, termed in the orders "Camp Supply."[25]

Plans for the post had been executed at Fort Dodge by Sully's acting engineer officer, First Lieutenant Henry Jackson, Seventh Cavalry, before the expedition got underway. According to orders, this construction was to be "a temporary work built of logs" to be occupied by the infantry battalion while the cavalry ranged south to find and strike the Indians.[26] On

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[24]Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, pp. 211-12. Barnitz gave the date of Custer's request as November 19. *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 207. Harvey makes no mention of the Indian trail in his entries for November 17, 18 or 19. "A Farrier's Diary," pp. 83-84. Custer wrote: "Had the Kansas volunteers been here, as was expected, My orders would then have allowed me to follow the back trail of the war party right to their village. . . ." Custer, *Following the Guidon*, p. 16. Details of the march from Camp Sandy Forsyth, November 12-18, are in *New York Herald*, December 12, 1868.

[25]General Field Orders No. 8, Headquarters of troops operating south of the Ark's and Dist. Upp. Ark's, in the field, Camp Supply, I.T., November 18, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633; *Army and Navy Journal*, January 2, 1869; Special Field Orders No. 38, Headquarters District of the Upper Arkansas, in the field, November 15, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633; Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, pp. 212-13; Ryan, *Ten Years*, p. 46, 47; Gibson, "Battle of the Washita," p. 9; Godfrey, "Washita Battle," p. 485; Record of Events of the Seventh Cavalry, Company G, November, 1868, in Carroll, *Washita!*, p. 32; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 206. The site of Camp Supply had been preselected by Sully, based on his recall of the site of his engagement with the Indians on September 13, as well as on the judgements of Major Elliott, Captain Page, and the scout/trader John Smith. Robert C. Carriker, *Fort Supply, Indian Territory: Frontier Outpost on the Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970),p. 13. See also, Rea, "Washita Trail," p. 245.

[26]General Field Orders No. 10, Headquarters of troops operating south of the Ark's and Dist. Upp. Ark's, in the field, Camp Supply, I.T., November 18, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633.

Thursday, November 19, the soldiers began laying out and erecting the new station, a project that occupied the next several days. Major Inman, noted Captain Barnitz, "begins to unload his vast supply of axes, spades, shovels, grindstones, doors and casings, window casings, sashes, boards &c &c--a large pile of paulines [sic] being among the latter."[27] The post, raised near where Sully skirmished with the Cheyennes in September, was intended to provide an advanced supply facility for not only the present campaign, but for future ones going into the Indian Territory, as well. The work progressed quickly; orders directed that "troops accompanying the mowing parties and those in the timber will *not* return at noon for dinner, but will carry that meal in their haversacks" so they would not have to pause so long from their work. Armed with axes and saws, the men harvested wood from the surrounding countryside. Using bull teams, they "snaked" hundreds of logs to the site, then raised a 10-foot-high stockade, complete with loopholes for musketry, secured at its base by a perimeter of excavated trenches. The palisaded wall had two blockhouses at the northwest and southeast diagonal corners, besides storehouses. The soldier quarters formed lunettes of half dugouts at the open northeast and southwest corners, each extending in an angled "vee" with front-to-rear sloping roofs permitting protective fire against an attacking foe. Sully issued orders prohibiting the destruction of boxes, barrels, and gunny sacks and directing that they be turned over for use in constructing the field works. The men also dug wells to provide water for men and beasts, and mowing machines cut dead grass in the environs for use as forage. Despite its name, Camp Supply eventually turned out to be

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[27]*Life in Custer's Cavalry*, pp. 206-07. For orders detailing work to be performed to facilitate the construction of Camp Supply, see General Field Orders No. 10, Headquarters of troops operating south of the Ark's and Dist. Upp. Ark's, in the field, Camp Supply, I.T., November 18, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633.

something of a misnomer.[28] Said one officer: "While there was a partial supply of everything, there was not an adequate supply of anything, at least for such a prolonged and far reaching campaign."[29] Barnitz registered that the Seventh would probably remain at Camp Supply for two weeks, "for the infantry have no idea of being left 'unprotected' before the new Post is completed." The Seventh Cavalry likely went into camp on ground a short distance west of the stockade.[30]

At Camp Supply, the growing rift between Sully and Custer resurfaced. Custer fumed over Sully's earlier rebuff. Both were lieutenant colonels, but Sully commanded the District of the Upper Arkansas (which lay beyond the border of the Indian Territory in which he was

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[28]General Field Orders No. 10, "Headquarters of troops operating south of the Ark's and Dist. Upp. Ark's. In the field, Camp Supply, I.T.," November 18, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633; *New York Herald*, December 26, 1868; Carriker, *Fort Supply*, pp. 12, 17;Barnitz to Joseph B. Thoburn, November 28, 1910. Albert Barnitz Papers (BA-1D), Oklahoma Historical Society; Godfrey, "Washita Battle," p. 485; *Harpers Weekly*, February 27, 1869. Captain Barnitz, commenting years later on a drawing of Camp Supply that appeared in *Harpers Weekly*, February 27, 1869, recalled that the stockade "consisted of round logs, placed on end, side by side in a trench--their alignment being preserved by scantling 2"x4" fastened horizontally along the inner side of the structure with wooden pins, driven into augur holes--these strips of scantling affording a bearing for one end of the boards constituting the roofs of buildings--built of small logs or poles, I think--extending around the inner side of the quadrangle, and intended for sheltering our Commissary stores and quartermasters' supplies, etc.--The troops occupying tents outside the structure and the basement of the *lunettes*--shown in the picture." Barnitz to Thoburn, January 30, 1911. Barnitz Papers (BA-lE), Oklahoma Historical Society; General Field Orders No. 11, Headquarters District of the Upper Arkansas, in the field, November 19, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633; Special Field Orders No. 40, Headquarters District of the Upper Arkansas, in the field, November 21, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633. The original Camp Supply stood a short distance northeast of where the succeeding and more substantial post quadrangle of Fort Supply was erected in 1870. Bob Rea, "Research: Original Stockade Location" (undated typescript in the files of Fort Supply Historic Site).

[29]Gibson, "Battle of the Washita," p. 10.

[30]*Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 207; Rea, "Washita Trail," p. 245.

campaigning), Custer only his regiment. Anticipating the arrival of the Kansas troops, both men realized that Colonel Crawford outranked them and technically might assert his command prerogative. The Articles of War stipulated that whenever volunteer and regular troops maneuvered together, brevet, or honorary, rank would pertain. To assure himself command following the arrival of the Nineteenth Kansas, Sully, therefore, began exerting authority by virtue of his regular army brevet rank of brigadier general. Realizing that Sully was operating beyond his district boundary, Custer followed suit, claiming command authority by virture of his own regular army brevet rank of major general. However, since the Kansas troops had not yet arrived, and concern over their whereabouts was growing, the matter for the time being became moot, and Sully continued in charge. This day he revised his earlier edict, directing that the Seventh Cavalry and the ten companies of the Nineteenth Kansas, once arrived, would move out, provisioned for thirty days, to find and strike the Indians. "We intend to make a raid after the red skinned devils and kill them as we can get them," wrote Private Harvey. On November 20, Sully ordered that discharge papers be prepared for all men (except reenlistees) scheduled for release from the army before the end of the month. Those scheduled for separation would be offered positions in the Quartermaster Department to continue helping to build the post.[31]

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[31]General Field Orders No. 10, November 19, 1868, as cited in Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 206; Harvey, "A Farrier's Diary," p. 84; Godfrey, "Washita Battle," p. 487. Sully, too, held a brevet of major general of volunteers (March, 1865), but Custer's own in the volunteers predated it by five months (October, 1864). Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary*, I, 348, 935-36; Special Field Orders No. 39, Headquarters District of the Upper Arkansas, in the field, November 20, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633. Governor Crawford's "Call for State Troops," October 10, 1868, is in Samuel J. Crawford, *Kansas in the Sixties* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Company, 1911), p.426. A roster of officers of the Nineteenth Kansas is in Charles K. Mills (comp.), *Rosters from 7th U.S. Cavalry Campaigns, 1866-1896* (Mattituck, N.J., and Bryan, Tex.: J.M. Carroll and Company, 1983), not paginated.

Two days after the construction of Camp Supply got underway, General Sheridan arrived, accompanied by two companies of the Nineteenth Kansas that had earlier been sent from Topeka to go with the Seventh Cavalry against the Indians. Deeming the winter campaign "an experimental one" requiring his presence to ascertain the extent of the troops' privations, Sheridan had departed Fort Hays on November 15 with a contingent of scouts and one company of the Tenth Cavalry, but freezing rain and snow had delayed his march. He reached Fort Dodge on the afternoon of the 16th, and proceeded on the next morning. At Bluff Creek he rendezvoused with the two volunteer companies enroute from Forts Hays and Dodge, then continued south through another snowstorm. As they proceeded, the general and his party spotted small bodies of Indians, the pickets firing on them at one bivouac. At one point they encountered a strong trail leading northeast, possibly the same one that Sully and Custer had feuded over days before. Sheridan reached Camp Supply on the evening of the 21st. Almost immediately, he settled the Sully-Custer "conflict of rank" by sending the less-than-aggressive district commander north to Fort Harker, leaving Custer in command of the expedition.[32]

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[32]Sheridan's report, November 1, 1869, p. 45; Captain Andrew Sheridan to AAG, Department of the Missouri, November 15, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 4; Captain Andrew Sheridan to AAG Department of the Missouri, November 16, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 4; Sheridan to Sherman, November 23, 1868. Sheridan Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Godfrey, "Washita Battle," pp. 485-87; Carriker, *Fort Supply*, pp. 17-18; Hutton, *Phil Sheridan and His Army*, pp. 61-62; Utley, *Cavalier in Buckskin*, p. 63; Leckie, *Military Conquest of the Southern Plains*, p. 97. Sheridan's trip from Fort Hays to Camp Supply is chronicled in Philip H. Sheridan, *Personal Memoirs of P.H. Sheridan. General United States Army* (2 vols.; New York: Charles L. Webster and Company, 1888), II, 310-12; and in Keim, *Sheridan's Troopers*, pp. 88-100. Privately, Sheridan deemed Sully "incompetent" and wrote Sherman that "If Genl Sully had permitted him [Custer] to follow backwards the trail of a war party coming from the Canadian, . . . his command might have or could have captured a very large village then encamped on the Canadian." Sheridan to Sherman, November 29, 1868. Sherman Papers, Microfilm Roll 13. Barnitz evinced sympathy for Sully: "I pity Genl. Sully, for I believe that he has tried to hurry forward affairs as fast as possible, whereas his being relieved

The question of the whereabouts of Colonel Crawford and the remainder of the Nineteenth Kansas Volunteer Cavalry, expected to reach Camp Supply no later than the 24th, picqued the curiosity of all. Sheridan wrote Sherman: "The Kansas troops have not yet arrived. I fear the snow has set them astray." In fact, he was right. The same storm that had delayed the general's arrival had also played havoc with the troops advancing from Topeka. Governor Crawford had issued a proclamation on October 10 calling for organization of the regiment. By October 26 the twelve companies were practically full and a training camp was established at Topeka. Five hundred Spencer carbines were delivered them by the federal government, and copies of *Cooke's Cavalry Tactics* had been requisitioned. His term in office set to expire shortly, Crawford resigned the governorship and assumed duty as the regiment's colonel. The enlisted men of the regiment represented a discordant mix of green recruits and veterans with past army service, while many of the the officers had garnered Civil War experience. The regiment totaled some 1200 officers and men. In early November, Companies D and G entrained west, ostensibly to accompany the Seventh Cavalry and the supply train south from Fort Dodge. Should these two companies--designated a squadron--not reach the Seventh or the supply camp in time, they were to push on and overtake the command as it headed for the targeted Indian villages. Meanwhile, on November 5 the remaining ten companies of the Kansas troops, but

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just now appears to reflect discredit upon him." *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 213. Accompanying Sully north were Chief District Quartermaster Inman, Acting Assistant Inspector General and Captain Myles W. Keogh, the two companies of the Nineteenth Kansas Volunteer Cavalry, and Company K, Fifth Infantry, along with 260 supply wagons needing replenishment. This command reported finding enroute the remains of two couriers sent by Sheridan from Bluff Creek to Fort Dodge, killed along Mulberry Creek. Captain Andrew Sheridan to AAG, Department of the Missouri, November 19, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 4; Captain Andrew Sheridan to AAG, Department of the Missouri, November 27, 1868, in ibid.; Carriker, *Fort Supply*, pp. 19-20.

meagerly rationed, set forth with their supply train directly for the projected Camp Supply.[33]

The journey to meet Sheridan's command coincided with the onset of bad weather. A hellacious rainstorm drenched the men as they passed southwest near Emporia and was followed by snow. On November 12, at Camp Beecher near present Wichita, the troops bivouacked and shoed horses; promised rations did not materialize there, yet Crawford believed those on hand would last until the command reached Beaver River. Guided by two white scouts, Jack Stilwell and William ("Apache Bill") Seamans, the regiment proceeded to the Ninnescah River, where, cold and wet, the soldiers encamped in a grove of cottonwoods. That night a blizzard swept in, collapsing the tents, imperiling the men as well as their animals, and precipitating a number of desertions from the ranks. Nonetheless, after marching another three days during which the troops subsisted on buffalo, they reached Medicine Lodge Creek. There 300 of the hungry horses suddenly stampeded, and only about 100 were ever recovered. Again on the night of the 21st bad weather struck, and the volunteers pressed on next day--walking much of the time because of the condition of the horses--amid a blowing, driving snowstorm until finally camping in the area of the Cimarron.

By now, however, Apache Bill--the lead scout--had become thoroughly lost. Crawford, after consulting his officers, decided to continue while one of his most experienced officers, Captain Allison J. Pliley, moved ahead with fifty men to try and reach Sheridan's force and get relief. The balance of the command, now desperate for food for themselves and their beasts,

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[33]General Field Orders No. 6, Headquarters District of the Upper Arkansas, in the field, November 7, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2633. Five days rations for 1200 men, to include bacon and hardtack, were sent to Topeka from Fort Leavenworth. Major James W. Forsyth to AAG, Department of the Missouri, October 29, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 2.

ranged about in hunting parties and scraped away snow so that the horses could munch the shriveled buffalo grass. Many animals collapsed and died while on the picket lines. On Tuesday, November 24, Crawford's troops moved on slowly, reduced to eating dried hackberries and some buffalo meat acquired during the day's march. To make matters worse, on the next day the men learned that Apache Bill had guided them too far south. At this, Crawford decided to mount part of his command on the best remaining horses and proceed forward and find Sheridan, leaving the rest, 360 men, to stay behind with the wagon train awaiting relief. On the 26th, Crawford's shrunken column negotiated gullies and ravines and finally crossed the Cimarron and turned west. Next day they reached the North Canadian River and turned upstream, and on the 28th encountered a group of scouts from Camp Supply, only five miles farther. When they straggled into the post they found tents, bedding, and plentiful rations awaiting them. Pliley had arrived three days earlier, then departed with wagons and an escort for the Cimarron. They eventually reached the balance of the troops, still subsisting on hackberries, and together made it in to Camp Supply on December 1. Besieged by winter conditions and near-starvation, the Nineteenth Kansas had persevered without major casualties despite several cases of frostbite and pneumonia. The only permanent losses to the regiment had occurred through desertion.[34]

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[34]This account of the travail of the Nineteenth Kansas in reaching Sheridan is compiled from the following sources: Schofield to Sherman, September 15, 1868, and Sherman to Schofield, September 17, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 3; Crawford to AAG, Department of the Missouri, November 12, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 1; David L. Spotts to Godfrey, May 17, 1929. William J. Ghent Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Washita File 2, Box 31; "Narrative by Josephus Bingaman," Elis S. Ricker Collection, Manuscript Division, Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln; George B. Jenness, "Lost in the Snow at Old Camp Supply," *Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine*, 5 (No. 4), pp. 52-57; Horace L. Moore, "The Nineteenth Kansas Cavalry in the Washita Campaign," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 2 (December, 1924), pp. 353-56; George H. Shirk, "The Journal of Private Johnson: A Fragment," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 44 (Winter, 1971), pp. 437-50; "A. L. Runyon's

As of the evening of November 21, the Seventh awaited only the arrival of the Kansas troops preparatory to moving south to find the Indian encampments. Next evening they received word that Sheridan had directed Custer to proceed the following morning at 6 o'clock (reveille at 3) with enough supplies in the wagons to last a month in the field. Sheridan may have given this order even earlier, based on his previous observation of the Indian trail leading northeast. "Believing that an opportunity offered to strike an effective blow, I directed Custer to call in his working parties and prepare to move immediately, without waiting for Crawford's regiment. . . ."[35]

As indicated, the eleven companies of the Seventh Cavalry that prepared to ride out of Camp Supply on November 23 represented a mixed lot of experience and ability. While the officer corps probably typified that of other period cavalry regiments in the army, the unit's affiliation with Custer and his own subsequent history has drawn inordinate attention to the composition of the Seventh's commissioned cadre. Some of the officers identified more closely with the regiment's lieutenant colonel than did others, and it is fair to say that a schism based on personality, temperament, and allegiance to Custer existed that became exacerbated in the wake

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Letters from the 19th Kansas," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, 9 (February, 1940), pp. 58-75; and, especially, Lonnie J. White, "Winter Campaigning with Sheridan and Custer: The Expedition of the Nineteenth Kansas Volunteer Cavalry," in Lonnie J. White (ed.), *Hostiles and Horse Soldiers: Indian Battles and Campaigns in the West* (Boulder, Col.: Pruett Publishing Company, 1972), pp. 91-99. The most comprehensive accounts by veterans of the unit are in James A. Hadley, "The Nineteenth Kansas Cavalry and the Conquest of the Plains Indians," *Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society*, 10 (1907-1908), pp. 431-41; Spotts, *Campaigning with Custer*, pp. 45-64; and Crawford, *Kansas in the Sixties*, pp. 321-24. A complete roster of regimental personnel is in *Roll of the Officers and Enlisted Men of the Third, Fourth, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Kansas Volunteers, 1861* [sic] (Topeka: W.Y. Morgan, State Printer, 1902), pp. 114-54.

[35]Sheridan, *Personal Memoirs*, II, 312.

of the present campaign. Because of their varied roles in the activities of the expedition, many of them deserve more than passing notice. Among them was Custer's second-in-command, Major Joel Elliott (1839-1868), an Indiana native who had risen through the enlisted ranks of that state's troops during the Civil War to achieve commissioned status. Elliott fought at Shiloh, Perryville, Stone's River, and Corinth, and had taken part in Grierson's famous cavalry raid in Mississippi. Twice wounded, the recipient of two brevets was mustered out in 1866. Elliott took an exam, qualified as major, and, following some political machinations, in 1867 accepted an "original appointment" in the newly organized Seventh Cavalry. As the senior major present during Custer's late suspension, Elliott had commanded the regiment during its operations in Kansas.[36] Among the company commanders was Captain Frederick W. Benteen (1834-1898). From Virginia, he had served as an officer of Missouri cavalry during the war, and was engaged in numerous actions, including Wilson's Creek, Pea Ridge, Tuscumbia, Vicksburg, and Tupelo, attaining several brevets for his meritorious performance and appointed a colonel of colored troops after the war ended. Appointed to the Seventh in 1866, Benteen had led Company H against Indians in Kansas since then, and had recently participated in the operations following the Saline-Solomon depredations, for which he was later breveted. He was known as a brave, dependable, and competent officer but was also considered to be an avid drinker, to be argumentative, and to carry a grudge. A fellow officer said that his "weakness was vindictiveness, which was pronounced. He was indifferent to the minor matters of discipline,

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[36]Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary*, I, 402; Guy V. Henry (comp.), *Military Record of Civilian Appointments in the United States Army* (2 vols.; New York: Carleton, Publisher, 1869), I, 150; Scrapbook, J.E. Taylor File, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, pp. 257-58.

and always had the poorest company in the regiment." He and Custer were not good friends, but that tenuous relationship seems not to have affected his military performance in 1868 and Benteen was regarded as a dutiful leader.[37]

One of Benteen's junior officers was First Lieutenant William W. Cooke (1846-1876), of Canadian birth, who as a veteran of the New York volunteer cavalry during the war had served at the Wilderness, Spottsylvania, Cold Harbor, and Petersburg. Mustered out in 1865, Cooke received an appointment of second lieutenant with the Seventh in July, 1866, and was promoted a year later. He had been detached from Company H to command the corps of sharpshooters during the present expedition.[38] Captain Louis M. Hamilton (1844-1868) commanded Company A. Scion of a prominent New York family and grandson of both Alexander Hamilton, the first Secretary of the Treasury, and Louis McLane, Secretary of State under President Andrew Jackson, he had served with his state's volunteer infantry at Harper's Ferry. Family connections netted him an appointment in the Regular Army Third Infantry, and he won brevets for duty at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg. He also fought at Petersburg and Appomattox. Appointed a

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[37]Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary*, II, 212; *Records of Living Officers of the United States Army* (Philadelphia: L. R. Hamersly and Company, 1884), p. 182; John M. Carroll and Byron Price (comps.), *Roll Call on the Little Big Horn, 28 June 1876* (Fort Collins, Colo.: Old Army Press, 1974), p. 117; Kenneth Hammer, *Biographies of the 7th Cavalry, June 25th 1876* (Fort Collins, Colo.: Old Army Press, 1972), p. 155; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, pp. 250-51; James M. Bell interview with Walter M. Camp, no date. Camp Manuscripts. Manuscripts Department, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington. "It always galled Benteen to serve in such low rank as captain after having been a colonel in the war. For this reason, he never took the interest in his company that might have been expected of him." Ibid. A full-length biography is in Charles K. Mills, *Harvest of Barren Regrets: The Army Career of Frederick William Benteen, 1834-1898* (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1985).

[38]Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary*, II, 324; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 253; Hammer, *Biographies*, p. 8.

captain in the Seventh Cavalry in July, 1866, Hamilton was well liked and respected by his peers, as well as by the enlisted men. Reportedly the youngest captain in the army, he was known as a conscientious officer who could be counted on in all instances to do his soldierly duty.[39] His contemporary in the Seventh was Albert Barnitz (1835-1912), captain of Company G. As with Hamilton, Barnitz began his army career in the echelons of the state forces during the Civil War, fighting in the Kansas-Missouri border country as well as in the Virginia theater, the latter under Sheridan and Custer. He garnered brevets for gallantry and meritorious service, was wounded, and attained the grade of major by the conflict's end. He joined the Seventh as captain in 1866 and spent the interval between then and the present campaign pursuing Indians on the prairies and plains of Kansas.[40]

Other officers of note included Captain Robert M. West (1834-1869), Company A, who had served as an enlisted man in the mounted rifles before the Civil War. During the war, he served with Pennsylvania troops and rose to the rank of colonel, attaining several brevets (including one as brigadier general of volunteers for his service at Five Forks, Virginia). Like his fellows, West received an appointment as captain in the Seventh Cavalry in July, 1866, and would resign from the army in March, 1869, as a result of illness aggravated by a severe drinking problem.[41] His principal subaltern was First Lieutenant Edward S. Godfrey (1843-1932), who

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[39]Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary*, II, 494; Henry, *Civilian Appointments*, I, 156; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 262.

[40]Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary*, I, 193; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, pp. 3-10.

[41]Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary*, I, 1020; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, pp. 280-81.

joined the regiment in Kansas on his graduation from West Point in 1867. Godfrey had served as a private of Ohio troops in 1861; he would log a distinguished career in the Seventh lasting a quarter century, participating with the regiment in nearly every one of its major engagements with Indians between 1868 and 1890.[42] An officer with Company M was First Lieutenant Owen Hale (1843-1877), who had spent the war as an enlisted man and officer in the New York volunteer cavalry, had been mustered out of service in 1865, and joined the Seventh on its organization.[43]

Captain Thomas B. Weir (1838-1876) commanded Company D of the Seventh. An Ohio native, he served with Michigan cavalry troops during the war. Weir took part in the siege of Corinth and in the operations around Mobile, and in 1862 spent six months as a Confederate prisoner of war. Later breveted for his Civil War service, he was mustered out of the volunteers a lieutenant colonel in 1865 and later served in Texas under Custer, with whom he was friends. When the Seventh was organized, Weir accepted a commission of first lieutenant with the regiment and served as its commissary officer until promoted captain in 1867.[44] Francis M. Gibson (1847-1919), of Pennsylvania, was second lieutenant of Company A, having joined the regiment scarcely a year earlier in October 1867. Gibson would one day author an account of the

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[42]Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary*, I, 460; *Records of Living Officers*, p. 169; Carroll and Price, *Roll Call*, pp. 61-63; Hammer, *Biographies*, pp. 187-88; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, pp. 260-61.

[43]Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary*, I, 487; Carroll and Price, *Roll Call*, p. 131; Hammer, *Biographies*, p. 187; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, pp. 261-62.

[44]Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary*, I, 1015; Carroll and Price, *Roll Call*, p. 162; Hammer, *Biographies*, p. 91; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 280.

Washita expedition.[45] His company officer was First Lieutenant Thomas W. Custer (1845-1876), younger brother of the field commander. Custer had spent three years of the war as an enlisted man with Ohio troops, fighting at, among other places, Stones River, Chickamauga, and Atlanta, before gaining a commission in the Michigan cavalry. He subsequently received numerous brevets, besides two medals of honor (for capturing Confederate battle flags three days apart, the latter effort resulting in a severe wound to the face), and joined his brother in the new regiment in July, 1866. Tom Custer would also died with his brother at the Little Big Horn.[46]

Captain James M. Bell (1837-1919) was the regimental quartermaster in charge of the supply wagons and their contents during the trip south. Bell, from Pennsylvania, served with Ohio and Pennsylvania troops in the war, and won brevets for his performance in the Wilderness campaign and at Reams's Station, Virginia. Mustered out in 1865, he joined the Seventh as a second lieutenant in 1866.[47] Another veteran officer was Edward Myers (1830-1871), a captain in the regiment since its organization. A German immigrant, Myers had served as an enlisted man in the dragoons before the Civil War, and during that conflict had continued with the redesignated First Cavalry as a lieutenant until Appomattox, winning brevets of captain, major, and lieutenant colonel for his gallant and meritorious conduct. He also joined the Seventh Cavalry in 1866 where he commanded Company E. His service, however, was somewhat marred

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[45]Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary*, I, 453; Carroll and Price, *Roll Call*, p. 130; Hammer, *Biographies*, pp. 155-56; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 260.

[46]Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary*, I, 348; Hammer, *Biographies*, p. 75; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 257.

[47]Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary*, I, 208; Carroll and Price, *Roll Call*, pp. 116-17; Hammer, *Biographies*, pp. 91-92; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, pp. 249-50.

by his temperment, his performance often bordering on incompetence, and general bad health.[48] George W. Yates (1843-1876) was captain of Company F. A New Yorker, Yates had served with Michigan and Missouri troops in the Civil War and had been awarded brevets for "conspicuous gallantry" at Fredericksburg (where he was wounded) and Beverly Ford, Virginia, and for Gettysburg. After the war he had served with the Second Cavalry as a second lieutenant, and transferred to the Seventh as captain in 1867.[49]

The oldest officer in the regiment by far was William Thompson (1813-1897), who commanded Company B and who was fifty-five in 1868. Varied in background, the Pennsylvanian had been a lawyer and had served with the Iowa territorial legislature as chief clerk, eventually becoming a representative from that state to Congress. He later practiced law and edited an Iowa newspaper. In the Civil War he captained a unit of state cavalry, served in Missouri and Texas, meriting two brevets, and became colonel of his regiment. Thompson joined the Seventh as a captain on its organization.[50] First Lieutenant Samuel M. Robbins (1832-1878), a New Yorker, became a captain in the First Colorado Cavalry in 1861, took part in the Battle of Apache Canyon in 1862 that halted the Confederate invasion of New Mexico, and later served as chief of cavalry in the District of Colorado until 1865. He joined the Seventh Cavalry in July, 1866, on its organization, and in 1868 served with Company D, although on the

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[48]Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary*, I, 739; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 270.

[49]Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary*, I, 1065; Hammer, *Biographies*, p. 121; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 283.

[50]Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary*, I, 958; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 279.

campaign was detailed as Custer's aide-de-camp.[51]

Other officers of note in the coming campaign were First Lieutenant Charles Brewster and Captain Myles W. Moylan. Brewster (1836-1904), commanding Company I vice its captain, Myles W. Keogh, who was detached as a member of Colonel Sully's staff, was from New York, saw service with that state's cavalry during the war and aided in suppressing the New York City draft riots in 1863. He later served with Sheridan's cavalry brigade in the Shenandoah, and was breveted at war's end for "efficient and meritorious services." Brewster joined the Seventh Cavalry as a second lieutenant in July, 1866, and won promotion to first lieutenant in February, 1867. He was not considered a good or competent officer and would leave the army under a cloud in 1870.[52] Conversely, the Massachusetts-born Captain Myles W. Moylan (1838-1909), was considered one of the most capable officers in the regiment. He had risen through the enlisted ranks during the 1850s and 1860s to reach commissioned status by the end of the Civil War. Moylan served with Custer during the war, fighting at Gettysburg and Brandy Station, among other places. Dismissed from the Fifth Cavalry on a trivial charge in 1863, Moylan enlisted in the Massachusetts cavalry under an assumed name and was soon after commissioned again, taking part in the operations around Petersburg and Appomattox. After the war Moylan enlisted in the army and in 1866 was assigned to the Seventh Cavalry, where he quickly

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[51]Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary*, I, 834; Bartnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 272.

[52]Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary*, I, 243; Henry, *Civilian Appointments*, I, 140; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, pp. 251-52.

advanced to first lieutenant and served as regimental adjutant.[53]

Second Lieutenant Algernon E. Smith (1842-1876), a New Yorker, was commissioned with that state's volunteer infantry and fought at Richmond, Petersburg, and Cold Harbor, Virginia, and Fort Fisher, North Carolina, where he was badly wounded and for which action he received one of several brevets. Smith, who became a devoted Custer deciple, joined the Seventh Cavalry in 1867 and took part in various expeditions around Fort Dodge, Kansas.[54] First Lieutenant Henry J. Nowlan (1837-1898), also from New York, served in the state's cavalry forces during the Red River Campaign of 1863. Held prisoner for nearly two years, Nowlan escaped and took part in Sherman's drive through the Carolinas. He was later severely wounded while serving in Texas after the war, but joined the Seventh Cavalry as a second lieutenant in July, 1866, and was promoted the following December.[55] Assistant Surgeon Henry Lippincott (1839-1908) was from Nova Scotia, and served during the Civil War as surgeon with California troops. In 1866 he was appointed assistant surgeon and first lieutenant and was assigned to the Seventh Cavalry from March to November, 1867, and later, in October, 1868, for the duration of the campaign.[56]

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[53]Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary*, I, 733; Henry, *Civilian Appointments*, I, 172; Carroll and Price, *Roll Call*, pp. 146-47; Hammer, *Biographies*, p. 45; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, pp. 268-70.

[54]Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary*, I, 893; Henry, *Civilian Appointments*, I, 181; Hammer, *Biographies*, pp. 45-46; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, pp. 275-76.

[55]Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary*, I, 753; Carroll and Price, *Roll Call*, pp. 148-49; Hammer, *Biographies*, p. 8; *Records of Living Officers*, p. 168; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, pp. 270-71.

[56]Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary*, I, 634; Henry, *Civilian Appointments*, I, 91; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 267.

Besides the officers, a number of hired civilian personnel would play significant roles in the expedition. Perhaps ultimately the most useful civilian employee along was Benjamin H. Clark (1842-1914), known as Ben Clark, who was carried on Quartermaster Bell's "hired" rolls as a "Guide and Scout," one of five such paid at the rate of $100 per month (two more civilian guides received $75 per month). Clark was from St. Louis and had earlier served in a volunteer unit during the Mormon War in the 1850s and in the Sixth Kansas Volunteer Cavalry during the Civil War. Much of this service occurred in the Kansas-Missouri border country, and he spent the years since the Civil War guiding freight trains through the Indian country, by which means he became proficient as a scout. Known as a brave, responsible, intelligent, and level-headed frontiersman, Clark had joined Sully for his late summer campaign in 1868, an assignment that continued under Sheridan and Custer.[57] Another prominent scout was Moses ("California Joe") Milner (1829-1876), a Kentuckian who had gone west and become a trapper and mountain man. A scout of vast experience, he had served under Colonel Stephen Watts Kearny and Doniphan during the War with Mexico, 1846-48, joined the gold rush to California in the early 1850s, and established an Oregon cattle ranch in 1853. He prospected in Idaho and Montana, then moved

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[57]"Report of Persons and Articles employed and hired . . . in the field during the month of November, 1868." NA, RG 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General. Entry 304, 1868; *Portrait and Biographical Record of Oklahoma* (Chicago: Chapman Publishing Company, 1901), pp. 261-62; Dan L. Thrapp (comp.), *Encyclopedia of Frontier Biography* (3 vols.; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), I, 274-75; James R. Foley, "Walter Camp & Ben Clark," *Research Review: The Journal of the Little Big Horn Associates*, 10 (January, 1996), p. 19; Clark to Dr. E.L. Clark, September 9, 1911, containing autobiographical data. Transcribed by Bob Rea from eBay online auction entry, December 21, 1999; *The Daily Oklahoman*, August 2, 1914.

south to New Mexico, and began scouting for the army in 1866.[58]

Milner had a decided procivity for liquor that sometimes complicated his otherwise discerning abilities as a scout. One soldier reminisced about him thus:

> [California Joe] understood the Indians and their language thoroughly, but, like many others, he liked his fire water. . . . He was generally togged out in a buckskin suit. His hair and beard he wore long. He was armed with a government rifle and rode a small government mule. There was nothing very attractive about Joe's appearance, but being a jolly fellow he was well liked. One time he absented himself from the camp, became intoxicated and returned after a short time, alarming the camp by yelling and making gestures as he rode in. General Custer placed him under arrest, but after a short time he was released.[59]

Milner's proclivity to drink cost him his position as chief of scouts, which subsequently fell to Ben Clark.[60]

Another "Guide and Scout" was the swarthy mixed-blood Raphael Romero (1843?-ca. 1908), of Mexican or Indian origin and possibly of Mexican-Arapaho mixed descent. A young man who had lived for years among the Indians (and reportedly had been stolen by them as a boy), he was valued for his knowledge of the frontier as well as for his linguistic skill with the

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[58]Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 268. A romanticized biography appears in Joe E. Milner and Earle R. Forrest, *California Joe, Noted Scout and Indian Fighter* (Caldwell, Ida.: Caxton Press, 1935). For accounts of Milner, see, Custer, *Following the Guidon*, pp. 25-30; and Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, pp. 192-98.

[59]Ryan, *Ten Years*, p. 47.

[60]Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, p. 198.

Cheyenne and neighboring tribal languages. During the Civil War, Romero had served with the Colorado Second Cavalry in 1862-63. The officers in the command dubbed him "Romeo," "a sobriquet to which he responded as readily as if he had been christened under it. . . ."[61] Yet other civilian guides and scouts carried on the rolls were E.V. Carr, John Corbin, W.E. Stone, Louis McLoughlin, and Jack Fitzpatrick. Gweso Chouteau was hired as interpreter ($100 per month) for the twelve Osage scouts. Osage chiefs Little Beaver and Hard Rope ($75 per month each) led the delegation, the balance of whom ($50 per month each) were known as Little Buffalo Head, Draw Them Up, Sharp Hair, Patient Man, I Don't Want It, Big Elk, Little Black Bear, Lightning Bug, Little Buffalo, and Straight Line.[62]

It had originally been proposed to approach the Utes to scout against the Cheyennes, Arapahos, and Kiowas, offering them rations and "all the plunder they might capture," but on Governor Crawford's recommendation Sheridan had finally settled upon recruiting Osages from the nearby reservation in southeastern Kansas. Of those who signed on, Hard Rope was a chief and during the Civil War had reportedly battled Confederate troops near the community of

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[61]Ibid., pp. 236-37; John H. Page, "Reminiscences of Indian Wars in Kansas and Indian Territory, 1866 and 1871" (unpublished manuscript, undated but ca. 1895-98, in the Old Guard Museum, Fort Myer, Virginia), p. 9; *Clinton Times Tribune*, February 19, 1933, cited in Peter Harrison, "The Eyes of the Sleepers: Cheyenne Accounts of the Washita Attack," *The English Westerners' Society Brand Book*, 31 (Summer, 1997), p. 24n40.

[62]"Report of Persons and Articles employed and hired . . . in the field during the month of November, 1868." NA, RG 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General. Entry 304, 1868; "Descriptive List of Persons and Articles employed and hired. . . ." NA, RG 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General. Entry 304, 1868. The names on the rolls are at variance with those given in other sources. Other names often given for some of these scouts are Big Wild Cat, Eagle Feather, Tally, Trotter, Wolf, and Little Bear. Arthur Shoemaker, "Osage scouts helped George Armstrong Custer track down Cheyenne raiders on the Washita," *Wild West*, 5 (June, 1992), pp. 10.

Independence, Kansas. Little Beaver, also a chief, was also known as John Beaver or Little Beaver II. The Osages who volunteered would receive pay, clothing, weapons, and horses during their service.[63] When they joined the troops, Custer had described them as "a splendid-looking set of warriors. . . ."

> They are painted and dressed for the war-path, and well armed with Springfield breech-loading guns. All are superb horsemen. We mounted them on good horses, and to show us how they can ride and shoot, they took a stick of ordinary cord-wood, threw it on the ground, and then, mounted on their green, untried horses, they rode at full speed and fired at the stick of wood as they flew by, and every shot struck the target.[64]

The Osages, along with the civilian scouts and guides, would factor importantly in the army's campaign. And as the weather worsened on the evening of November 22, the troops and their officers, along with the diverse array of supplemental personnel, huddled in rude quarters and tents at Camp Supply, doubtless contemplating the morrow and speculating over what it might bring, yet prepared to make the most of the conditions in advancing as quickly as possible to breach the secluded winter quarters of the Cheyennes and Arapahos.

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[63]Sheridan to Penrose, October, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part 5, Entry 2, Vol. 1 (Fort Lyon); Louis F. Burns, *A History of the Osage People* (Fallbrook, Calif.: Ciga Press, 1989), pp. 365-67; Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, pp. 209-10. For the Osages, see Mathews, *The Osages*.

[64]Quoted in Custer, *Following the Guidon*, p. 23.

Chapter 6: Closing Proximity

General Sheridan's directive for Custer to take the field was motivated by the earlier discovery of an Indian trail headed northeast, and he feared that the tribes to the south would flee once they realized that troops were operating in their vicinity. He later learned that the war party consisted of Cheyennes and Arapahos. "They had been north, killed the mail carriers between Dodge and Larned, an old hunter at Dodge, and two of my expressmen, whom I had sent back with letters from Bluff Creek to Dodge."[1] Enthused over his assignment, Custer recorded his explicit instructions, which were to move out with thirty days' rations, "go south from here to the Canadian River, then down the river to Fort Cobb, then south-west towards the Washita [Wichita] mountains, then north-west back to this point, my whole march not exceeding two hundred and fifty miles."[2] Although the presence of a fiercely blowing snowstorm changed the plan to move up Beaver River and find the Indian trail, it did not deter the projected movement to find the Cheyennes and Arapahos. In fact, it was eventually seen as beneficial. "We could move and the Indian villages could not," recalled Custer. "If the snow only remained on the

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[1]Sheridan's report, November 1, 1869.

[2]Custer to Elizabeth, November 22, 1868, in Custer, *Following the Guidon*, pp. 16-17. Some time after the subsequent attack on the Indians at the Washita River, a version of Sheridan's orders read: "To proceed south, in the direction of the Antelope hills, thence towards the Washita river, the supposed winter seat of the hostile tribes; to destroy their villages and ponies; to kill or hang all warriors, and bring back all women and children." Quoted in Keim, *Sheridan's Troopers*, p. 103. Had Custer received these orders previously, it is doubtful that he could have restrained himself from quoting at least parts of them in his letters to his wife. Furthermore, there was apparently some feeling, among the junior officers, at least, that "our exact destination was problematical [and] the location of the hostile villages was purely a matter of conjecture, and . . . our movements seemed to be enveloped in an impenetrable cloud of mystery." Gibson, "Battle of the Washita," p. 10.

ground one week," he told Sheridan, "I promised to bring the General satisfactory evidences that my command had met the Indians."[3] The train of wagons was made ready, the troops, equipment, and horses all inspected, and but a few tents loaded; officers and men made arrangements to take along only the "clothes on their backs." Reveille came at 3 a.m. on the twenty-third, and over the next three hours the troops groomed and saddled their horses, belted and adjusted their weapons and equipments, downed meager breakfasts, and awaited the signal to mount.[4]

At 6 a.m., beneath leaden skies, "Boots and Saddles" sounded, and the soldiers lifted themselves into their saddles and moved out in column of fours, the band at the front of the column blaring out the old Civil War favorite, "The Girl I Left Behind Me."[5] The snow kept

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[3]*My Life on the Plains*, p. 215.

[4]*New York Herald*, December 8, 1868; Keim, *Sheridan's Troopers*, pp. 102-03; Harvey, "A Farrier's Diary," 184. Several years later, Custer wrote that reveille came at 4 a.m. *My Life on the Plains*, p. 214; Gibson, "Battle of the Washita," p. 11; Godfrey account in *The Daily Oklahoman*, July 14, 1929. Some officers tried to get around Custer's stricture on extra clothing. Sergeant John Ryan recalled that when one wagon became mired crossing a creek, Custer ordered it unloaded, whereupon he found a trunk belonging to Lieutenant Owen Hale. "The trunk was burst open and the contents, consisting of long topped boots, corduroy pants, velvet pants, etc., dumped out, and the men were given orders to help themselves, which they promptly did. The owner of the clothing could do nothing, as he had disobeyed orders. I thought it kind of hard to see enlisted men of the company riding along and wearing some of the clothing belonging to this officer, which he could not claim." "Ten Years with General Custer among the American Indians," in *The Newton* (Massachusetts) *Circuit*, May 28, 1909. Copy in the Fred S. Barde Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society.

[5]Ryan told how during the campaign some of the bandsmen, disliking the cold, came to believe that if something was wrong with their instruments they would not have to perform. Some punched holes in their pieces to keep from playing. "Custer got on to the racket," claimed Ryan, "and ordered the men that had anything the matter with their instruments to walk and do the usual fatigue duty while on the trip. . . . After a few days the biggest part of those instruments were brought into service in the band by being patched up with soap and one thing or another, and that ended the business with the Seventh cavalry band." "Ten Years," in *The Newton*

coming as the troops, their greatcoat capes buttoned about their heads, passed down the line of infantry tents, the foot soldiers cheering their departure, then out onto the plain, fairly buried in a foot-deep accumulation. "We were off to a winter campaign in a country never traversed by any man in our outfit," recalled an enlisted man.[6] The white-out that enveloped everyone and everything hindered the scouts and guides from spotting distant landmarks and thus leading the way. Under these circumstances, Custer personally took over, guided by a hand-held compass, and the command groped its way southwest, at about 2 p.m. reaching the hills and ridges on the west side of Wolf Creek and presently halting after a march of fourteen miles. Eventually, the storm fell away, yet the struggle through the heavy snow proved fatiguing for both man and beast, and the wagons, numbering some thirty-seven, were delayed. As the temperature warmed, "the snow balled on the feet of our shod animals causing much floundering and adding to the fatigue of travel," wrote Godfrey. Moreover, the rawhide seats of many of the saddles became soaked, and when redried warped their trees, causing hurtful riding. Wielding axes, the men felled sufficient timber and built fires, and, once the wagons appeared, the officers raised their tents and meals were served. That night the men feasted on rabbit stew, made from the plentiful local quarry.[7] Private Harvey recorded that "at night we had to lay in snow eighteen inches deep with our clothes all wet and freezing, although we have plenty of wood and good fires to keep us

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Circuit, May 28, 1909.

[6]Account of Thomas Shanley in *The Daily Oklahoman*, August 2, 1925.

[7]Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, pp. 216-18; Godfrey, "Washita Battle," p. 487; Gibson, "Battle of the Washita," pp. 11-12; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 213; Record of Events of the Seventh Cavalry, Company G, November, 1868, in Carroll, *Washita!*, p. 32; Rea, "Washita Trail," p. 248.

warm." The Indian scouts made their camp apart from the troops, and "the monotonous sound of beating the tom-tom was heard at all hours."[8]

At reveille Tuesday morning (November 24) the soldiers found that the storm had stopped during the night, but that its total accumulation measured about eighteen inches; however, it melted quickly beneath a glaring sun that brought some cases of snowblindness. Movement southwest proceeded after breakfast, although on Custer's orders several of the wagon-masters and teamsters were arrested and forced to wade through the snow with the column for several hours as punishment for delaying the departure of the command. The day's march led up the south side of the valley of Wolf Creek, tracing the sand hills; the troops crossed camped along the stream that afternoon after passing sixteen miles. Sergeant John Ryan years later reminisced over details of the march (doubtless referencing both the movement to the Washita and back):

> The rivers were frozen over, but the ice was not thick enough to hold up our horses, and the first companies to enter the stream broke the ice for the other companies. The water was quite deep, in fact, so deep that quite a number of the men wet their feet and legs in riding through it. After crossing these rivers and getting our wagons through I remember we had quite a time drying ourselves

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[8]Harvey, "A Farrier's Diary," p. 85; Charles Brewster, "Battle of the Washita," in *The National Tribune*, August 22, 1901. The site of this camp was near the mouth of Boggy Creek. Rea, "Washita Trail," p. 249. The trail of the Seventh Cavalry is historically delineated on a map by Captain Henry Alvord entitled, "Map of Parts of Kansas, Texas, Colorado, New Mexico and the Indian Territory, with the routes of all columns of U.S. troops operating against hostile Indians in the Department of the Missouri during the winter of 1868-1869." NA, RG 77. Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers. Cartographic Archives Division, Civil Works Map File, Item Q142 (cited in ibid.).

before fires made of dry bushes, weeds and wild prairie grass--anything that would make a blaze. In making camp at night we could take shovels and clear the snow from a place about five or six feet square and then build a fire on the ground. When the ground became thoroughly dried and warm we would shovel the snow away from another place and move the fire there. Then we would spread down the remnants of the horse covers that could not be kept on the horses, and our saddle blankets. The rest of our blankets were used for covering. We placed our saddles on the ground and used them as pillows, the men sleeping three or four together in what they called spoon fashion. Of course the side next to the ground would be warm on account of the fire, but the upper side would be very cold. When one man was uncomfortable and wished to turn over, they would all have to turn over together to warm the other side. We also had to sleep with our boots and clothes on, for if we took off our boots they would be so frozen in the morning that we could not get them on. . . . Each man had to do his own cooking by making a fire out of dry brush, dead wood and grass, and holding his cup of coffee over the blaze. Our horses suffered terribly in being tied to the picket ropes. When a number of horses were tied together, they backed around to the storm and stood as close as they could with heads down.[9]

On the 25th, a clear day, the march resumed, direction due south, as the Osages steered the command up and over a divide and on toward the South Canadian River near the Antelope Hills and ever nearer the upper Washita drainage, the area suspected to harbor the Indian villages.

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[9]*Ten Years*, pp. 48-49.

The weather turned warm and large numbers of game animals, driven to shelter by the storm, appeared in the timber along the stream, and the scouts were enabled to approach huddled clusters of buffalo and shoot them easily; groups of soldiers then butchered the beasts and placed the cuts for storage on the slow-moving wagons that lurched behind. Occasionally officers, including Custer, left the column to pursue and kill the buffaloes. The march approached the Canadian, and the troops saw the Antelope Hills rise in view. Some of the horses and mules began to play out from exhaustion, necessitating the doubling of teams at stream crossings. After traveling eighteen miles, late that day, as darkness loomed, the soldiers took up a bivouac along a timbered tributary now called Commission Creek, about a mile from the north bank of the Canadian. Both teamsters and soldiers cut bark from the cottonwoods to feed their animals, which could not reach the grass beneath the snow. In anticipation of finding a trail--perhaps *the* trail, or the returning path of those who made it, lately discovered above Camp Supply--Custer consulted with his Indian and white scouts, then determined to send on the morrow three companies--G, H, and M--under Major Elliott to scout for signs of the tribesmen up the north side of the Canadian River.[10]

Next morning before dawn the 26th, Elliott and his men, including several white and Osage guides, all duly armed and rationed, started out. "The morning was excessively cold, and

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[10]*New York Herald*, December 8, 1868; Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, pp. 219-21 (which unaccountably and confusingly has added a day to the events of the march); Edward G. Mathey, "The Washita Campaign and Battle of the Washita," in Carroll, *Washita!*, pp. 35-36; Godfrey, "Washita Battle," pp. 487-88; Gibson, "Battle of the Washita," pp. 12-13; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, pp. 250-26; Record of Events of the Seventh Cavalry, Company G, November, 1868, in *Washita!*, p. 32; Rea, "Washita Trail," pp. 249-51. An article in an undated copy of *The Custer County Post-Dispatch*, entitled "Battle of the Washita," stated that the Osages Little Beaver and Hard Rope told Custer that the "usual" crossing place lay twelve to fifteen miles away, at a place since known as the Littlerobe crossing.

a dense fog prevailed," observed Captain Barnitz. "It was necessary to dismount very often, and walk in order to prevent our feet from freezing. As the snow was a foot deep, with a hard crust, which broke beneath our feet, walking was exceedingly difficult and tiresome."[11] This command was to travel as far as fifteen miles, and, if a trail was found, would start in pursuit, sending news back to the main command of the supposed composition of the party and direction they were headed, at which word Custer would move cross country to intercept them if possible. Custer, meantime, intended to ford the Canadian and move south, past the Antelope Hills, a sharply rising escarpment pinnacled by several small buttes and reaching as high as 300 feet, and camp along an upper tributary of the Washita. Of major concern was a place to bring the wagons across the rising and fast-currented Canadian, laced with ice chunks and slush, but this was eventually accomplished. Meantime, Custer and some of his officers ascended the hills to look the country over and found themselves momentarily engulfed in a frozen mist of sundogs and prismatic shades,--a natural phenonomen that could not be seen at lower elevations. After three hours in getting the wagons across, Custer readied to resume the march south on the plains east of the hills. Before long a courier from Elliott, Jack Corbin, rode up with news that two large Indian trails, one less than twenty-four hours old and reflecting use by as many as 150 warriors, had been discovered twelve miles distant heading south-southeast across the Canadian from Elliott's position. Moreover, an abandoned Indian camp lay nearby. Custer sent word back via Corbin, astride a fresh horse, telling Elliott to stay on the trail and notify him (Custer) of any directional deviation, and at 8 p.m., if the columns had not yet joined, to halt and await the arrival of the balance of the command (Corbin reached Elliott at about 2 or 3 p.m., and another

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[11]*Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 215.

courier arrived shortly after dark.).[12]

After finding the trails, Elliott's command proceeded across the Canadian and ascended the high divide separating that stream's drainage from that of the Washita River. His soldiers followed the fresh trail most of the day, finally stopping along a tributary of the latter stream after Corbin reached them. Custer, meantime, assembled his officers and laid out his plan. He would leave an officer and eighty-man detachment with the larger part of the wagon train, with instructions to follow as conditions might permit, and made ready to angle southeast cross-country with the balance of his men to find Elliott. A smaller detached train of two wagons, containing forage and "light supplies and extra ammunition," besides four ambulances, personally commanded by Lieutenant Bell would roll out closely on the trail of Custer's men.[13] Each man, armed with his Spencer carbine and Colt's revolver, would carry 100 rounds of ammunition, besides hardtack, coffee, and forage for his animal. In outfitting, remembered Custer,

> Every man and officer in the command was vigorously at work preparing to set out for a rough ride, the extent or result of which one could foresee. Wagons were

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[12]Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, pp. 219-21; Mathey, "Washita Campaign," in Carroll, *Washita!*, pp. 35-36; Godfrey, "Washita Battle," pp. 487-88; Gibson, "Battle of the Washita," pp. 12-13; Rea, "Washita Trail," p. 253-54; Louis Kraft, *Custer and the Cheyenne: George Armstrong Custer's Winter Campaign on the Southern Plains* (El Segundo, Calif.: Upton and Sons, Publishers, 1995), p. 40. In his official report, Custer wrote that the trail showed evidence of 100 warriors and was discovered "near the point where the Texas boundary line crosses the Canadian River." *Army and Navy Journal*, December 12, 1868. Barnitz detailed Elliott's movement, along with the discovery of the trails and camp, in *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, pp. 215-18.

[13]Bell interview notes. Bell interview notes. Camp Manuscripts, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Field Notes, Box 2, Folder 1. (Hammer Collection, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, Notebook 4, No. 1).

> emptied, mess chests called upon to contribute from their stores, ammunition chests opened and their contents distributed to the troopers. The most inferior of the horses were selected to fill up the detail of eighty cavalry which was to remain and escort the train; an extra amount of clothing was donned by some who realized that when the bitter, freezing hours of night came we would not have the comforts of tents and campfire to sustain us.[14]

As the command prepared to pull away, Captain Hamilton, who as officer of the day would normally remain with the train, approached Custer and beseeched him to be allowed to accompany the soldiers. Custer relented, provided Hamilton could find a substitute, and eventually Lieutenant Edward G. Mathey, afflicted with snowblindness, remained in charge of the wagons in Hamilton's place. Soon the command pulled out, Captain Yates's Company F in the van, rode hard south without resting, and late in the day Custer's scouts located the Indians' and Elliott's trails. The weary command overtook the major's bivouac at approximately 9 p.m., having marched thirty miles since early in the day. It was Thanksgiving night, and the soldiers, after unsaddling and feeding their mounts, and taking care to conceal their fires, dined on coffee and hardtack.[15]

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[14]Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, p. 225.

[15]Ibid., pp. 227-29; *New York Herald*, December 8, 1868; Brewster, "Battle of the Washita"; Godfrey, "Washita Battle," pp. 488-89; Gibson, "Battle of the Washita," pp. 14-15; Record of Events of the Seventh Cavalry, Company G, November, 1868, in *Washita!*, p. 32; Keim, *Sheridan's Troopers*, p. 108; Walter M. Camp interview with Dennis Lynch, undated. Walter M. Camp Papers, Brigham Young University Library, Provo, Utah (copy in the Kenneth Hammer Collection, Notebook 9, No. 6, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, Crow Agency, Montana; Camp interview with Edward S. Godfrey, March 3, 1917. Camp Papers, BYU (copy in ibid., Notebook 8, Folder No. 36); Rea, "Washita Trail," pp. 253-54; Leckie, *Military Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 98-99. Custer's account of Hamilton's switch with

The lands penetrated by the Seventh Cavalry in the quest to strike the Indian villages encompassed the drainage system of the southeastwardly flowing Canadian River, and included the tributary streams of that watercourse as well as those of the Washita, which ran south of, and roughly paralleled, the Canadian, and which was itself an eventual tributary of the Red River.[16] The country was and is characterized by rolling hills and undulating plains interspersed with wooded creeks and streams that typify the transitional topography between woodland prairie and open plains. In the valleys of the rivers and streams grew assorted plants that afforded shelter for game and fostered the passage of the winter months for the tribes that harbored there. The valleys, generally lower than the surrounding plains, offered shelter from cold winds while providing water, firewood and areas of grass, trees, and brush where pony herds might graze on whatever sparse vegetation existed. They also presented game in the form of deer, rabbits, wild turkeys, and prairie chickens to augment the diet of dried buffalo meat. Occupation of the stream valleys was seasonal, and had doubtless been recurrent in the region for generations.[17]

Mathey is detailed in Custer to Mrs. Hamilton (mother), August 29, 1869, presented in "In Memoriam: Brevet Major Louis McLane Hamilton Captain 7th U.S. Cavalry," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 46 (Winter, 1968-69), pp. 365-67.

[16]The Canadian is today known as the South Canadian River.

[17]Hal K. Rothman and Associates, "Historic Landscape Conditions and Use Study, Washita Battlefield National Historic Site" (draft report, 1999), pp. 12, 14, 15. Tree varieties included cottonwood, willow, hackberry, elm, plum, and haw. Bushes bordering the streams included wild plum, wild grape, red and black haw, hickory nut, black walnut, and pecan. Grasses in the area included sideoats grama, little bluestem, sand bluestem, and western wheatgrass, buffalo grass, blue joint grass, sand crab grass, Indian grass, switch grass, and love grass, among other possible species. Other ground cover included prickly pear and yucca. Ibid., pp. 16-20. See also, Jill Cowley, *Cultural Landscape Inventory, Level Two, Washita Battlefield National Historic Site* (Santa Fe: National Park Intermountain Region, Santa Fe Support Office, 1999), pp. 89-90, 105.

Along one of these streams, the Washita, stood Black Kettle's village. Since moving below the Arkansas following the Saline-Solomon raids in August, these people had gravitated associatively with other Cheyenne bands. During mid-October, the people were settled on the South Canadian, not far from the Antelope Hills, along with some Lakotas and the Arapahos of Little Raven where they bartered with Mexicans who had come to trade. Some of the livestock captured during the late raids into Kansas was given to the Mexicans, besides buffalo robes, for guns and ammunition. During the first part of November the camps relocated southeast to the Washita, called by them Lodge-Pole River. Drawn by the presence there of water, firewood, and timber for lodge poles, the Indians also found the place appealing for its abundant winter grass on which the ponies could feed. Most of the Cheyennes raised their tipis beside a long, north-sweeping loop of the stream, southeast of Little Raven's Arapaho camp, which lay toward the north end of the loop, and west of Kicking Bird's small village of Kiowas (the lodges of Santanta, Lone Wolf, and Black Eagle having earlier repaired to the area of Fort Cobb), with camps of Comanches and Kiowa-Apaches not far away. This large Cheyenne assemblage included the followers of Medicine Arrows, keeper of the sacred arrows, along with those of Little Robe, Sand Hill, Stone Calf, Old Little Wolf (Big Jake), and Black White Man. Just below this large village lay another, smaller, camp of Cheyennes with Old Whirlwind; together these two villages totaled 129 lodges. Several miles to the west, across the bend at a point where the Washita assumed a more east-west alignment, Black Kettle's people raised their lodges. Black Kettle, as an advocate for peace with the whites, had tried unsuccessfully to control some of the young men in his camp who had sporadically participated in the war parties mustered against enemy tribes and the white settlements in Kansas. The onset of cold weather and the retarding

effects of snow accumulations had, for the time being, halted these activities. Altogether, the population of the various Indian camps on the Washita in November totaled approximately six thousand people.[18]

By late in the month, Black Kettle's village stood on the south side of the Washita between two gently rising ridges approximately two miles apart on either side of the stream. The location presented a shelter from the sometimes fierce gale-like freezing winds that swept over the land. The lodges occupied the generally flat, or terraced, area of the red clay floodplain about one mile east of the confluence of a northwardly flowing tributary of the river (presently called Plum Creek) and approximately one mile west of the confluence of a northeastwardly flowing one (now called Sergeant Major Creek). Between, the Washita, which likely averaged from nine to twelve feet in width along its course at this point, knifed briefly southeast, then shot north before finally circling back south in its west-to-east passage, and in this latter, roughly crescent-shaped bend, which formed something of a sheltered pocket about three-quarters of a mile wide and comprising roughly thirty acres, most of the lodges were raised. The banks of the stream were somewhat steep above the river channel, which was shallow at this season. Black Kettle's

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[18]Custer to AAAG, Department of the Missouri, December 22, 1868, in U.S. Senate, 40 Cong., 3rd sess., *Letter of the Secretary of War, Communicating Copies of reports upon Indian affairs in the military division of the Missouri*, Ex. Doc. No. 40 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1969), p.69 (hereafter cited as Custer's report, December 22, 1868); Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, I, 594, 599; Brill, *Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 132-33. Estimates of the locations of the various tribal bands are in Alvord to Forsyth, November 22, 1868, enclosing "Semi-Weekly Report No. 1. Summary of information relating to Indians." "Reports of Officers in the West and Southwest, 1874-75 [sic]." Military Division of the Missouri Papers. Manuscript Division. U.S. Army Military History Institute, Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. "Washita" was a Choctaw word meaning "Big Hunt," a reference to the profusion of game in its environs. Brill, *Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 127-28.

own lodge stood beneath a cottonwood tree near the first-mentioned, smaller, bend, along with those of several other Cheyenne families.[19]

Back from the south riverbank stood a near perpendicular embankment some fifty feet high, its top composing the rising prairie that undulated away to the south. The embankment paralleled the Washita for several miles downstream, gradually lessening in height until it joined the level tract bordering the stream. The land on the north side of the Washita swept away spaciously, then formed spurs that gradually and finally merged into high red sandstone hills in the distance. The number of tipis with the village totaled fifty-one, and included two of visiting Lakotas and two of Arapahos. Perhaps as many as 250 people occupied the camp. Among the families present with Black Kettle were those of Big Man, Wolf Looking Back, Clown, Cranky Man, Scabby Man, Half Leg, Bear Tongue, Roll Down, and Little Rock. The latter represented the sole council chief remaining with Black Kettle since Sand Creek. Beyond the tipis, and scattered to forage in the different gullies and washes west of the village, were the ponies. Near Black Kettle's lodge a pony trail crossed from the north side through a shallow part of the Washita, skirting the village then running west to the sand hills where the large herds of Cheyenne ponies grazed.[20]

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[19]The village stood in the northeast quarter of Section 12, Township 13 North, Range 24 West, according to Camp notes, interview with Ben Clark, 1910, Camp Papers, Lilly Library. See also, "Map of the Washita Battle Ground." Map 3 (township and range), Fred S. Barde Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society. The course of the stream through the section has changed considerably since 1868, partly for agricultural purposes. See William B. Lees, Douglas D. Scott, Bob Rea, and C. Vance Haynes, "Archaeology of the Washita Battlefield National Historic Site" (draft document dated October 31, 1997, Oklahoma Historical Society), pp. 14-15.

[20]Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, I, 598-99; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, p. 315; Brill, *Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 132-33; news clipping entitled, "Custer's Washita Fight" (account by Ben Clark), *New York Sun*, May 14, 1899; Rothman and Associates, "Historic

Through the years since the Washita engagement there have remained questions about whether the Cheyennes and Arapahos had legal justification, with reference to the provisions of the Medicine Lodge Treaty, to have located themselves on the Washita River. Article 2 of that document, ratified during the summer of 1868, specified that the Indians would occupy a district essentially comprising the lands enclosed by the south boundary of Kansas, the Arkansas River, and the Cimarron River. While the difficulties with the army proceeded following the Saline and Solomon encounters, however, the tribesmen had gravitated farther south, below to the South Canadian and then to the Washita, both of which streams remained south of, and removed from, the new reservation. Yet Article 11 of the treaty conceded and "reserved the right to hunt on any lands south of the Arkansas so long as the buffalo may range thereon in such numbers as to justify the chase. . . ." There was no question as to the availability of buffalo in the region; even Custer's men had taken advantage of their presence just days earlier. And since there was no provision ordaining the length or frequency of such hunts, a sustained tribal presence through the winter might clearly qualify as such under liberal interpretation of the treaty. Thus, the tribesmen normally should have enjoyed relative security in their position.

Landscape Conditions," pp. 21-22. The remote location of Black Kettle's village from that of the principal concentration of Cheyennes might simply be coincidence. In 1930, however, Mrs. Blackhead, approximately eighty years old and a survivor of the Washita attack, claimed that after Sand Creek Black Kettle "never camped with the main body of Cheyennes. He always pitched his village a distance from the main camp." *The Daily Oklahoman*, July 27, 1930. For some of the individuals known to have been present in the village, see Appendices B and C. In 1909, the village site comprised "a meadow of the farm of G.F. Turner, a merchant of Cheyenne, and as its surface has never been plowed, it has about the same contour as at the time the battle was fought. Each recurrent spring the land is overflowed, and most of the timber present at the time of the contest has been cut down, but enough remains to adequately identify the spot. . . ." Fred A. Hunt, "The Subjugation of Black Kettle," *Overland Monthly*, n.s. 54 (July, 1909), pp. 104-05.

The problem at hand, however, was that the third, fourth, and fifth subparagraphs of Article 11 of the treaty specified that the Indians "will not attack any persons at home or traveling, nor molest or disturb any wagon-trains, coaches, mules, or cattle. . . ."; "that they will never capture or carry off from the settlements white women or children"; and that "they will never kill or scalp white men, nor attempt to do them harm." All of these stipulations had been violated by various elements of the Cheyennes and Arapahos who had conducted many of the raids throughout much of 1868, and especially since August. Under the War Department's interpretation (most notably the concurring views of Generals Sherman and Sheridan), however, the entire band population--not just the individuals committing them--was to be held accountable for the depredations. Moreover, under provisions of Article 2 of the treaty, U.S. army troops, considered as "officers, agents, and employees of the Government," were specifically authorized to enter and pass through the reservation "in discharge of duties enjoined by law"; technically, however, since the present military operations were taking place beyond prescribed reservation boundaries, this particular stricture did not apply. Thus did the legalities and circumstances of their situation place Black Kettle's people--as well as any of the other villages of Cheyennes and Arapahos represented along the Washita--in immediate jeopardy of army attack. In the final analysis, the government's view, as manifested through the War Department, and belatedly by the Bureau of Indian Affairs through its superintendent, was that the tribesmen had breached the Medicine Lodge Treaty and therefore should face the consequences of their action.[21]

The man whose people unknowingly lay in harm's way had been a staunch advocate for

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[21]"Treaty with the Cheyenne and Arapaho, 1867," in Kappler, *Indian Affairs*, II (Treaties), pp. 985, 988; Elmo Scott Watson and Don Russell, "The Battle of the Washita, or Custer's Massacre?" *Chicago Westerners' Brand Book*, 5 (November, 1948), pp. 50, 54.

peace with the whites for many years. Black Kettle, who was then sixty-seven years old, was born near the Black Hills in 1801, a Suhtai, the eldest son of Swift Hawk Lying Down. His brothers were Gentle Horse and Wolf, and his sister was Wind Woman. As a youth and young man, he exhibited traits that characterized a good warrior and leader, and took part in several war parties and horse-stealing expeditions against neighboring tribes, particularly against the Kiowas, Comanches, and Kiowa-Apaches when the Cheyennes were enemies of these people. In 1838, Black Kettle and others had located the camps of these tribes preparatory to joining the Arapahos in battling them along Wolf Creek below the Cimarron River. Ten years later, while leading a war party against Ute tribesmen, Black Kettle's wife, Little Sage Woman, was taken by the enemy near the headwaters of the Cimarron River, and despite subsequent efforts to get her back, she was never found. He then married a woman of the Wotapio band and lived with her people. When the chief of the band died in 1850, Black Kettle, who had long demonstrated leadership abilities, became chief.

In 1861, Black Kettle and other chiefs signed the controversial Fort Wise Treaty, which restricted the Southern Cheyennes' land base and ultimately provoked the conflict that culminated in the attack on Black Kettle's camp at Sand Creek, in which massacre U.S. volunteers from Colorado killed more than 150 of the villagers, including several council chiefs. Many other Cheyennes had refused to abide by the Fort Wise provisions, and after Sand Creek they viewed as futile Black Kettle's continued attempts to foster peace, and coincidentally with the rise of the Dog Soldiers they came to represent something of a political schism in Southern Cheyenne society. Black Kettle's signing of the Little Arkansas Treaty in 1865 further aggravated the discord and cost him and other chiefs influence among the Cheyennes in the treaty

councils that followed at Medicine Lodge, where the tribesmen, at best, presented but a disjointed front. Black Kettle's inability to keep his young men from participating in the depredations during the summer of 1868, while reflective of the dynamics of Cheyenne society, perhaps represented the key contributing factor in the present circumstances, wherein elements of the U.S. army, however oblivious to his identifiable presence, nonetheless prepared to attack his people.[22]

It was with the hope that such trouble might be averted that Black Kettle had recently gone to speak with federal representatives at Fort Cobb, some eighty miles southeast of the Washita villages. There, in early November, Colonel William B. Hazen, General Sherman's designee to oversee Indian affairs, had arrived to relieve Captain Henry Alvord's temporary stewardship. Alvord had already met with the Kiowas, Comanches, Caddoes, Wichitas, and

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[22]Basic biographical data for Black Kettle is from Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, pp. 322-24. Bent was married to Black Kettle's niece in 1866 and lived with him until the early summer of 1868 and knew the chief well. See also, Bent to Joseph B. Thoburn, July 12, 1911, December 27, 1911, January 9, 1912, and January 19, 1912. Thoburn Papers, Oklahoma Historical Society. Other sources state that he was born in ca.1797 and identify his parents as Hawk Stretches Out and Sparrow Hawk Woman, and that his siblings were Gentle Horse, Wind Woman, and Stone Teeth. The date of Black Kettle's loss of his wife to the Utes is debatable, with other sources suggesting that it occurred in 1854-55. John Sipes, Jr., Collection. 88.32. Box 15, Folder 217 (temp.), "Washita Massacre, Fldr 2." Oklahoma Historical Society; George Bird Grinnell Papers, Folder 471. Braun Research Library, Southwest Museum, Los Angeles; Grinnell Papers, Folder 69, which includes "Life of Black Kettle" by Wolf Chief, which states that Black Kettle was elected a chief in 1855 and lead chief of six head chiefs in 1861. Ibid. Moore, *The Cheyenne Nation*, p. 274, identified Black Kettle's father as Wolf-on-a-Hill, who had married into the southern Suhtai band. Somewhat dated treatments of Black Kettle appear in Joseph B. Thoburn, *Standard History of Oklahoma* (2 vols.; Chicago: American Historical Society, 1916), II, 864-66, and Duane Gage, "Black Kettle: A Noble Savage?" *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 45 (Autumn, 1967), pp. 244-51. In a piece originally published in the *St. Louis Republican*, December 3, 1868, the chief was viewed as "a man of more than ordinary natural ability . . . ." *Army and Navy Journal*, December 12, 1868. For a modern synthesis of biographical data about Black Kettle that differs in some respects from that given above, see, Stan Hoig, *The Peace Chiefs of the Cheyennes* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), pp. 104-21.

neighboring tribes and distributed what few food provisions were available. On October 31 he learned from the chiefs of the projected arrival at Fort Cobb of a delegation of Cheyennes and Arapahos for the purpose of expressing friendship. Alvord had heard that the Cheyennes as recently as November 1 had camped on the South Canadian near the Antelope Hills, had attempted to entice the Kiowas and Comanches into hostilities, and, further, that these tribesmen had been receiving merchandise, including ammunition, from Mexican traders. By the time Hazen appeared, a large number of Caddoes and Wichitas, together with some smaller groups, had arrived at Fort Cobb, where Alvord had distributed them provisions. Hazen, on Sherman's direction, was to provide them food and protection and thus keep them from becoming involved in the imminent warfare. Sherman told Hazen of Sheridan's plans in moving against the Cheyennes and Arapahos, stating that Sheridan, in possibly operating in the vicinity of Fort Cobb, would attempt to "spare the well-disposed" tribesmen.[23]

Black Kettle headed the delegation of Cheyennes that rode into Fort Cobb on November 20. With him were Little Robe, Little Rock, Big Man, and Wolf Looking Back of the Cheyennes and Big Mouth and Spotted Wolf, who headed the Arapaho delegation. The chief, with whom the issue of peace for his people was now vital, told Hazen that he wanted that for his band, and claimed that he had no control over any other body of Cheyennes. Speaking for all of his people camped on the Washita, Black Kettle told Hazen:

> The Cheyennes, when south of the Arkansas, did not wish to return to the north side because they feared trouble there. . . . The Cheyennes do not fight at all this

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[23]Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 320-22. See Alvord's report in Alvord to Forsyth, November 5, 1868. "Reports of Officers in the West and Southwest, 1874-75." Military Division of the Missouri Papers.

> side of the Arkansas; they do not trouble Texas, but north of the Arkansas they are almost always at war. When lately north of the Arkansas, some young Cheyennes were fired upon and then the fight began. I have always done my best to keep my young men quiet, but some will not listen, and since the fighting began, I have not been able to keep them all at home. But we all want peace, and I would be glad to move my people down this way; I could then keep them all quietly near camp. My camp is now on the Washita, 40 miles east of Antelope Hills, and I have there about 180 lodges [meaning the total number of Cheyenne lodges along the Washita]. I speak only for my own people. I cannot speak [for] nor control the Cheyennes north of the Arkansas.[24]

Big Mouth also spoke for the Arapahos, likewise appealing for peace. Knowing the status of these Indians in Sherman's mind, however, Hazen told them forthrightly that he could not make peace with them and that, further, they must not come to Fort Cobb and jeopardize the peace with those Kiowas and Comanches presently there. Speaking of the current military maneuvers, Hazen said:

> North of the Arkansas is General Sheridan, the great war chief, and I do not control him; and he has all the soldiers who are fighting the Arapahoes and Cheyennes. Therefore, you must go back to your country, and if the soldiers come to fight, you must remember they are not from me, but from that great war chief,

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[24]"Record of a conversation held between Colonel and Brevet Major General W.B. Hazen, United States army, on special service, and chiefs of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes of Indians, at Fort Cobb, Indian Territory, November 20, 1868," in U.S. Senate. 40 Cong., 3 sess. Exexutive Document No.18, pp. 22-23, as cited in Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, I, 596.

and with him you must make peace. . . .[25]

Hazen told the chiefs that he would forward their words to the Great Father, and if he approved their treatment as friendly Indians Hazen would send for them to come to Fort Cobb. He told them that they must not come in again unless he sent for them, and that they must keep well out beyond the friendly Kiowas and Comanches. Yet it was Hazen's belief that, in order to prevent more such outbreaks instigated by young warriors and to gain a sustained peace, these people must suffer the army's punishment.[26]

Following their meeting with Hazen, the chiefs started back to their villages on November 21 and 22. Captain Alvord wrote: "Parties of Cheyennes and Arrapahoes leave here . . . after in vain attempting to arrange with General Hazen for a removal of their people to this

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[25]Ibid., pp. 596-97.

[26]Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 323-24; Kroeker, *Great Plains Command*, pp. 79-80. Superintendent Murphy believed that most of the affected tribes, including the Cheyennes and Arapahos, would assemble at Fort Cobb to get clear of the army while obtaining their annuities. Aware of Sheridan's strategy of converging columns, he complained that "in all these military movements I fancy I see another Sand Creek," a view with which Commissioner Taylor disagreed. Murphy to Taylor, November 15, 1868, in Sen. Ex. Doc. 13, pp. 31-32. Taylor was still obsessed of the notion that the army was punishing the innocent to get the guilty, and "I am satisfied the delivery [of the guilty for the Saline-Solomon raids] was not effected on their [the Cheyenne leaders'] part only from want of time. . . ." Taylor to Browning, November 21, 1868, in ibid., pp. 32-33. Yet Hazen also feared potential conflict if the Cheyennes came to Fort Cobb, and while he explained what he had done he asked for clarification on the peace issue: "To have made peace with them would have brought to my camp most of those now on the war path south of the Arkansas; and as General Sheridan is to punish those at war and might follow them in afterwards, a second Chivington affair might occur, which I could not prevent. I do not understand that I am to treat for peace, but would like definite instructions in this and like cases. To make peace with these people would probably close the war, but perhaps not permanently. I would prefer that General Sheridan should make peace with these parties." Hazen also complained that "the young men who accompanied these chiefs expressed pleasure that no peace was made, as they would get more mules, and that next spring the Sioux and other northern bands were coming down and would clean out this entire country." Hazen to Sherman, November 22, 1868. Sheridan Papers, Library of Congress, Microfilm Reel 76.

vicinity to remain peaceable. They seem quite astounded at the novel fact that the war is not to cease at their pleasure." Alvord reported that the chiefs were well-armed with rifles, carbines, and revolvers, and plenty of ammunition. Following their departure, Hazen and Alvord plotted to send several Padouca Comanche spies to the villages "to ascertain the substance of the council which will take place . . . on their arrival, and information as to the change of their camps, which will doubtless follow."[27] Within days, Alvord would report that "the camps of all the Cheyennes and Arrapahoes south of the Arkansas River have been consolidated, from 16 to 20 miles west-southwest [sic--east-southeast] from the Antelope Hills [at] the Washita River forks. At that fork, the large main camp of these hostile Indians, with their families and all their stock . . . was situated on the night of the 22 inst--four days ago." Alvord reported that his intelligence had confirmed that Mrs. Blinn and her son, captured in early October near Fort Lyon, were being held in the Cheyenne-Arapaho camp. By November 26, when Black Kettle and the others had returned to their villages on the Washita, Hazen, on learning that these leaders had "talked badly of fight" after having left Fort Cobb, requested as a precautionary move that two companies of the Tenth Cavalry be sent to him from Fort Arbuckle.[28]

The return trip of Black Kettle and the others from Fort Cobb to the Washita villages must have been anguished, for, in effect, the Cheyennes and Arapahos had been told by Hazen

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[27]These scouts had been hired on Sheridan's direction. Alvord to Forsyth, November 21, 1868. "Reports of Officers in the West and Southwest, 1874-75"; Alvord to Forsyth, November 22, 1868, enclosing "Semi-Weekly Report No. 1. Summary of information relating to Indians." Ibid.

[28]Alvord to Forsyth, November 26, 1868, enclosing "Summary of Information regarding hostile Indians. 'Semi-Weekly Report No. 2.'" "Reports of Officers in the West and Southwest, 1874-75"; Hazen to Major James P. Roy, November 26, 1868. Sheridan Papers, Library of Congress, Microfilm Reel 76.

that to avoid warfare, and imminent direct attack by Sheridan's soldiers, they must somehow fend for themselves in negotiating a settlement. As a cold winter's storm set in, the leaders set out from Fort Cobb, sustained by foodstuffs provided by a trader, and pressed north into the mounting blizzard. They reached the villages late on the evening of the 26th, six days after having departed, and two Cheyennes, Big Man and Magpie, ate a supper of buffalo meat, crackers, and coffee in the chief's lodge, fretting over what steps to take. Later, Black Kettle convened a meeting with his headmen and told them of the distressing news about troops being afield. It was agreed that a delegation of leaders should seek out the soldiers and attempt to explain the Indians' position once the foot-deep snow cleared. To that end, runners would go out to find the military commands. Another decision was to move Black Kettle's camp to a more secure location closer to the downstream villages. The council lasted late into the morning hours of November 27.[29]

All the while that Black Kettle and the other chiefs ruminated over what to do, Custer's cavalry continued its approach. The trail that Elliott had found and that Custer had finally gained was that of a war party of young men coming home from the Smoky Hill country. This party, originally numbering as many as 150 men, had traveled north during the past summer to assist the Dog Soldiers in their combat with the whites along the Saline and Solomon. Some belonged to Black Kettle's camp, while others had come from the villages of Medicine Arrows, Little Robe, and Old Whirlwind farther down the Washita. Desirous of reaching their home camps by

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[29]Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, II, 599-600; Brill, *Conquest of the Southern Plains*, citing the account of Magpie, pp. 135-36. According to Brill, a visiting family of Lakotas in Black Kettle's village, on learning of the reported presence of soldiers in the area, decided to move their lodge downstream to the larger villages the next day. Ibid., pp. 137-38.

the shortest route, the war party had divided into two groups at the South Canadian. One group forded the river and kept bearing south via the Antelope Hills seeking the larger village on the Washita. The other traveled down the South Canadian, intending to cross over to the Washita and reach Black Kettle's camp. The first group reached the larger Cheyenne villages on the evening of November 25. The other party crossed the Canadian and proceeded south to the Washita, where they found evidence that the camp had moved downstream. They continued southeast, finally gaining Black Kettle's village later that same evening.[30] That night a war party of Kiowas that had been out west raiding the Utes returned and while passing through Black Kettle's village reported having seen near the Antelope Hills a large trail in the snow heading toward the Washita camps. The Cheyennes reportedly laughed at the information, disbelieving that soldiers would be operating that far south under the winter conditions. The Kiowas went on to their own village, although one named Trailing the Enemy elected to stay the night with

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[30]Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, II, 597-98, citing Grinnell and his Cheyenne informant. George Bent maintained that "this party going to Black Kettle's village has made it appear that Black Kettle's band was hostile, though these Cheyennes were not of his band." Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, p. 315. See also, Bent to Hyde, September 2, 1905, regarding this party's raiding in the Smoky Hill country. George Bent Papers, Manuscript 54, Letter 15. Colorado Historical Society. General Sheridan believe that the trail Custer followed had been composed of Cheyennes and Arapahos who had "brought back three (3) scalps, one (1) of which was the Expressman killed and horribly mutilated just before I had left Fort Dodge,--the mail on his person was found in 'Black Kettle's' camp." Sheridan, to AAG, Division of the Missouri, December 3, 1868. Sheridan Papers, Library of Congress, Microfilm Reel 76. On the afternoon of November 26, one of this party named Crow Neck returned over the route to retrieve a worn pony he had left to rest the preceding day. Far to the north, Crow Neck saw what he believed were soldiers, and when he returned to the camp he told a friend what he had seen. But, afraid that others would not believe him, and that Black Kettle might chastise him for being with the raiding party, he kept silent. Brill, *Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 136-37.

friends in Black Kettle's encampment.[31]

Following their hour-long repast along the tributary of the Washita, the Seventh Cavalry soldiers mounted their animals in the darkness and pressed forward on the trail of the war party, the slow-moving column led by Hard Rope and Little Beaver, who moved forward dismounted. Custer and the remaining Indian and white scouts rode several hundred yards behind the two Osages, but ahead of the troops, arranged in column of fours and following as much as one-half mile in the rear for fear that the loud crunching noise of their horses on the crusted snow might somehow alert nearby tribesmen. Years later, Lieutenant Brewster remembered of that night: "What a weird serpentine specter was this body, outlined upon the white snow. As it wound around the tortuous valley it had the semblance of a huge reptile, stealthily creeping to destroy its victim or foe."[32] Trumpet calls were prohibited. Precautions were taken to tie equipment down so that it might not rattle. Smoking was not permitted, and the men conversed only in whispers as they passed the miles in the cold, beneath scattered clouds that partly hid the moon. "It . . . became necessary 'to make haste slowly,'" recalled Lieutenant Gibson. "Frequent short halts were made, necessitated by the very deliberate, stealthy and cautious progress of the scouts in advance, who had evidently no intention of walking into a trap or ambush."[33] Moreover, the winding nature of the stream required numerous crossings that further delayed the movement. Presently, as they passed along the Washita valley, the Osages out in front smelled smoke from a

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[31]Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, II, 598. Reports that the people in Black Kettle's village stayed up celebrating the return of the war party seemingly are without substance. See Ibid., p. 680, note 11.

[32]"Battle of the Washita," in *The National Tribune*, August 22, 1901.

[33]"Battle of the Washita," p. 15.

wood fire, then a mile on spied the smouldering embers of one recently abandoned by herders out watching ponies, indicative of the proximity of a village.[34] The discovery, wrote Custer, "produced almost breathless excitement." On painstaking examination, the disturbed snow in the area of the fire revealed the tracks of many ponies, besides the traces of lodge poles being dragged. At this, Custer sent word to stop the column, then took the two scouts and advanced cautiously from ridge to ridge, finally surmounting a low ridge that overlooked the valley of the Washita from the northwest. From that point, probably at about midnight, Little Beaver stole to the crest and sighted a large herd of ponies about one-half mile away toward the river. There Custer joined him, and together they lay in the snow peering at the sight below. Custer at first thought they were buffalos, then barking dogs and a tinkling bell in the herd confirmed the presence ponies and of a likely village below.[35] Yet the lodges, hidden in the darkness by the timber along the stream, could not be easily discerned. As Custer prepared to turn back to his command, another affirming sound broke through the crisp predawn air: a baby's cry.

Custer returned down the slope to the larger body of scouts, where he sent orders to "halt the cavalry, enjoining complete silence and directing every officer to ride to the point we then occupied."[36] Custer directed Ben Clark to advance and determine whether the camp lay on the

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[34]Ben Clark told Camp in 1910 that the fire was actually a rotten log that had been left burning by the Indians. The site of the fire was about six miles above the village. Foley, "Walter Camp & Ben Clark," p. 19. Clark also said that the approach of the troops along the trail from the northwest put them in the vicinity of where local resident A.G. Smith's barn stood as of 1910. Ibid.

[35]One report stated that Custer used a night glass to verify the presence of the herd. *New York Herald*, December 29, 1868.

[36]Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, p. 233.

north, south, or either side of the Washita. Clark moved out with Jack Corbin and Rafael Romero, descending into the valley toward the stream, about a mile away, careful not to disturb the ponies or camp dogs. They reached the river bank and from there could see many of the fifty-one lodges silhouetted in the starlight and stretching along a flat bordering the south side of the Washita for a distance of perhaps one-quarter mile. From this point, Romero crept ahead into the camp seeking more information, then all withdrew back to the hill to the north where Custer and his officers waited. Clark reported the estimated warrior strength of the village to be around 150, less than one-fifth that of the command. Armed with this information, Custer ordered his troops to countermarch and remove themselves from the area so as to prevent their discovery by the Indians while plans were formulated for an attack.[37] Fearing that Bell's wagons, following on the trail about one mile behind the cavalry, might likewise alarm the camp, he sent a courier back to tell the lieutenant to stop where he was, that an attack would be made at dawn, and that he must wait until he heard the firing before advancing.[38]

When his officers arrived, Custer had them remove their sabers so that their noisy clanking would not carry forward to the village, then moved up the ridge to its crest so they might comprehend what lay before them in the darkness.[39] Captain Barnitz observed of the

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[37]Camp learned that the flat ground on which the troops settled was in 1910 occupied by Frank Turner. Foley, "Walter Camp & Ben Clark," p. 20. Turner also owned some acreage behind the ridge. Communication with Bob Rea, Fort Supply Historic Site, Oklahoma, December, 2000.

[38]Bell recalled that "the night was cold and the creaking of the wagons and ambulances could be heard for some distance." Bell to Camp, July 28, 1911. Camp Papers, BYU, Box 1, Folder 19 (microfilm).

[39]This tract in 1904 was part of the Kirtley farm, located in "the southwest and southeast of the northeast of Section 2," Township 13, Range 24. Lees *et al*, "Archaeology of the Washita

moment:

> We could see, though not distinctly, the course of the Washita, on our right, with what appeared to be tributaries entering from the left and possibly from the right, and the summits of steep bluffs were seen looming up on all sides of the valley, but the herds of ponies, and teepes [sic] were not visible although the tinkling of a little bell could be distinctly heard at times, and some of the officers who looked through a night glass were of the opinion that they could discern herds of ponies.[40]

From the sounds of the barking and infants' cries, as well as the tinkling of the pony bells, the relative positions of the core village and the herd was projected. Leaving two officers and an Osage on the hill to watch the village, the others crept down the slope and retrieved their sabers. Then Custer deliberated with them his plan of attack.[41]

"The general plan," wrote Custer, "was to employ the hours between then and daylight to

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Battlefield National Historic Site," p. 16.

[40]*Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 219. One contemporary statement mentioned the presence of fog in the Washita bottom, which, as daylight rose, obscured the trees and lodges in the camp. The fog helped to enable the troops in surrounding the encampment. NA, RG 94. "Medical History of Fort Supply, I.T., 1868-1894." Microfilm. That fog was generally present in area bottom lands at various times in the winter is confirmed in Barnitz's journal entry for November 26. *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 215.

[41]Beyond the specific references for quoted material, this account of the advance of the cavalry is drawn from Custer to Sheridan, November 28, 1868. "Reports of Officers in the West and Southwest, 1874-75" (hereafter cited as Custer's report, November 28, 1868); *New York Herald*, December 8, 1868; *New York Daily Tribune*, December 29, 1868; *New York Sun* (containing Ben Clark's account), May 14, 1899; *Army and Navy Journal*, December 12, 1868; Foley, "Walter Camp & Ben Clark," pp. 19-20; Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, pp. 230-32, 239; Godfrey, "Washita Battle," p. 489; Gibson, "Battle of the Washita," pp. 15-16; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, pp. 218-29; Merington, *The Custer Story*, p. 220; Brill, *Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 144-48; Leckie, *Military Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 99-100.

completely surround the village, and at daybreak, or as soon as it was barely light enough for the purpose, to attack the Indians from all sides." The tactic was a mainstay during the Indian wars--both before and after Washita--, that of troops in loose-order formation surrounding a village whose occupants were asleep and then attacking from all sides simultaneously, preferably at dawn, killing and wounding the residents, capturing their ponies, and destroying their property.[42] To accomplish that purpose here, Custer divided his command of approximately 800 men into four detachments. Major Joel Elliott commanded a battalion composed of G (Captain Albert Barnitz; Second Lieutenant Thomas J. March), H (Captain Frederick H. Benteen), and M (Captain Owen Hale, Second Lieutenant H. Walworth Smith) companies that would move left, or east, of the main force, keeping behind the string of ridges and knolls to the north, to quietly encircle the village's rear, or east side, and assume a position in the timber near the stream to attack it from the east or northeast, as the lay of the ground might allow. Captain William Thompson, commanding a squadron composed of B (First Lieutenant David W. Wallingford) and F (Captain George F. Yates, Second Lieutenant Francis M. Gibson) companies, would countermarch to the right of the main column, swinging down the slope to west and south of the village, cross the Washita, keeping well beneath the hills on the right bank to a position opposite the camp, and coordinate his attack on it with that of Elliott. At the signal, Thompson's force would close on the camp on horseback. Captain Edward Myers was to take companies E (First Lieutenant John M. Johnson, Second Lieutenant Algernon E. Smith) and I (First Lieutenant Charles Brewster), move down to a position in the woods approximately three-quarters of a mile

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[42]For discussion of the surround, or encirclement, tactic, see, Jamison, *Crossing the Deadly Ground*, pp. 43-45.

to Custer's right, and well south of it, cross the stream and advance to within sight of the camp, then prepare to strike it from the timber on the west, meantime preventing escape by occupants fleeing in that direction. Finally, from the discovery ridge Custer, aide-de-camp First Lieutenant Samuel M. Robbins (detached from Company D), and regimental adjutant First Lieutenant Myles Moylan, would accompany and oversee two cavalry squadrons commanded, respectively, by Captain Louis M. Hamilton (Companies A [First Lieutenant Thomas W. Custer] and C [First Lieutenant Mathew Berry]) and Captain Robert M. West (Companies D [Captain Thomas D. Weir] and K [First Lieutenant Edward S. Godfrey, Second Lieutenant Edward Law]), themselves accompanied by First Lieutenant William W. Cooke's sharpshooters and the Osage and other scouts. Medical officers accompanying this column were Assistant Surgeon Henry Lippincott and Acting Assistant Surgeon William H. Rennick.[43] The timed attack would be executed simultaneously from all directions, but it was important that each respective column knew the proximity of the others and stagger its appearance accordingly in order to avoid inflicting "friendly" casualties once the assault began. A contingency plan held that should the Indians discover any of the enclosing columns "the attack was to be made at once." As Barnitz reported,

> The signal of attack was to be sounded at daybreak by the band, which was to play on the summit of the ridge from which Genl. Custer's column was to advance, and

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[43]Mangum, "Muster Roll 7th Cavalry, Washita Battle"; "In Memoriam," pp. 370-71; *New York Herald* (1)--(need date); Mills, *Rosters from 7th U.S. Cavalry Campaign,* not paginated; Gibson, "Battle of the Washita," pp. 16-17; Brill, *Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 149-50. Custer's report of the engagement indicated a different approach for two of the columns. In it he stated that "Thompson . . . was to attack from the crest north of the village; while the fourth column [which Custer himself accompanied] was to charge the village from the crest overlooking it on the west bank of the Washita." Custer was on the east, or north, side of the river. Custer's report, November 28, 1868.

> instantly, at the appointed signal, or at the firing of a gun, the advance was to be made from all directions--all were to go in *with a rush* and this was particularly enjoined upon all the officers by Genl Custer, as he fully realized the importance of concentration.[44]

The colonel sent Lieutenant Godfrey back to Bell's train with an order for Captain Benteen's squadron, composed of Companies H and M, which had been rear guard with the wagons, to come forward. The camp guard, consisting of four or five sick men, along with a few deserters, remained to protect the train.[45]

Some time after 2 a.m. Elliott started his soldiers east, G Company in advance, tracing along a string of hills and ridges well back from the river so that the tribesmen would not discover their movement. Battalion officers directed the men not to smoke, to talk only in whispers, and to carry their cups in their haversacks to keep them from clanking against saddles or other equipment. Thompson, and later Myers, likewise started their men moving south and southwest to assume their positions. As Elliott's men passed east along the ground, they crossed over several well-worn trails leading in the direction of the Indian camp. Ascending the bluffs at one place, Elliott decided that he was moving too close to the camp and that the horses stepping along the crusted snow would alarm the tribesmen. He descended and countermarched his column, then moved farther north behind the bluffs as they pressed downstream to their assigned spot. Some time during the movement, Elliott discovered that the regimental band, which was

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[44]*Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 220.

[45]Bell interview notes. Camp Manuscripts, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Field Notes, Box 2, Folder 1. (Hammer Collection, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, Notebook 4, No. 1).

supposed to remain with Custer, was following him, and he turned it back. It was also noticed that Benteen's squadron had not yet advanced with the major's column.

At an outlying point, the major and Barnitz ascended what Barnitz later described as a "very steep conical hill" on their right and opposite the camp, which he subsequently termed "Sugar Loaf." Keeping low to the snow-encrusted ground, the two officers squinted their eyes trying to see the village away in the darkened valley. Again, however, the "short, snappish barking" of the Cheyennes' dogs betrayed its presence. Descending from the hill, they found a number of baying foxhounds that had somehow broken away from the wagon train parked all the way back on the South Canadian River and followed on the troops' trail. Fearing discovery, Elliott ordered the animals killed by strangulation and with knives. Then the battalion entered a deep rocky draw leading toward the river through which the troopers passed in single file, finally climbing up the steep sides by holding onto their horses' manes.[46] Soon after, they encountered a herd of ponies individually tethered in a grove of trees, and shortly gained the Washita some three-quarters of a mile below the village. Elliott and Barnitz then reconnoitered across the stream, finding even more ponies.

When Benteen arrived, they started their units west through the woods toward the camp. In the final dispositions, Benteen's companies (H and M) took position on the north side of the stream, while Barnitz placed Company G on the south side, the men in dismounted skirmish formation so that their right flank adjoined the Washita. Ten mounted soldiers under Sergeant Francis McDermott took position on the left of Barnitz's line to work in concert with Company F

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[46]The rocky draw described by Barnitz does not exist today, possibly having been filled in naturally and/or purposefully since 1868 and today constitutes more of a ravine. Lees *et al*, "Archaeology of the Washita Battlefield National Historic Site," p. 18.

of Thompson's battalion and with Myers's troops in closing off escape routes to the south and southeast.[47] Sergeant John Ryan, of Company M, recollected the ensuing wait:

> [We] were obliged to sit in our saddles, as we were under orders not to dismount. We were pretty cold, especially our feet, and we tried two ways of keeping them warm; first, to take the feet from the stirrups and let them hang down, thus allowing the blood to circulate; then to kick the feet against the stirrups and keep the blood stirring.[48]

Meantime, the column under Captain Thompson crossed the Washita, but possibly had trouble negotiating the broken ground in the dark in assuming its position to the south-southwest of the village.[49] Lieutenant Gibson, who accompanied this battalion, remembered: "Daylight never seemed so long coming, and the cold never so penetrating. It was an infraction of orders to talk or move about, so there was nothing left to do but to remain perfectly quiet and immovable, thus maintaining a death-like silence, while spending the night in moody meditation, broken

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[47]Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, pp. 220-25; *New York Herald*, December 29, 1868; Barnitz to Camp, January 12, 1910. Camp Papers, BYU, Box 1 Folder 11 (microfilm); Barnitz to Camp, November 18, 1910. Camp Papers, BYU, Box 1, Folder 14 (microfilm); Barnitz Interview, December 5, 1910. Camp Papers, Lilly Library; Ryan, *Ten Years*, pp. 51-52; S. Matthew Despain, "Captain Albert Barnitz and the Battle of the Washita: New Documents, New Insights," *Journal of the Indian Wars*, 1 (No. 2, 1999), pp. 137-38.

[48]*Ten Years*, p. 52. By his account, Ryan was in Company M at the time of the Washita encounter, although the muster rolls showed him assigned to Company B. Mangum, "Muster Roll 7th Cavalry, Washita Battle."

[49]Thompson's command, delayed in its march, likely approached the village through the north part of Section 14 and into the southwest quarter of Section 12. Lees *et al*, "Archaeology of the Washita Battlefield National Historic Site," p. 18.

occasionally by spasmodic shivers and involuntary shakes."[50]

Following the assignments, and the departures of Elliott's, Thompson's, and Myers's columns, the squadrons of Hamilton and West (with Custer) passed the remaining four hours until dawn in excruciating discomfort. Fires were not permitted, and the early morning cold debilitated the troops, who were ordered not to stamp their feet or pace for fear of the noise of crunching snow reaching the silent camp. The men stood with their horses or lay down in the snow holding the reins and waiting, some chewing hardtack, listening to the barking dogs in the valley. "[We were] cold, wet, and mad!" remembered one man. Officers clustered together in quiet discussion, while others slept on the hard-packed snow crust, their capes wrapped about their heads. The Osages gathered separately, wrapped in blankets and filled with paranoia that the troops might find too many Indians in the village and offer up their Indian scouts as hostages for their own deliverance. In the precautionary mode of the moment, Custer's greyhound, which tended to bark after the dogs in the valley, was at first muzzled, then garroted with a lariat, to silence him.[51] Two hours before daybreak, the moon disappeared, plunging the scene into pitch darkness until the hint of dawn appeared on the eastern horizon. Behind the ridge, as Custer awakened his officers, a phenomenon appeared to the southeast, resembling a signal flare and startling them that the village had somehow been alerted. It was a morning star, and its rising

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[50]"Battle of the Washita," p. 17.

[51]Camp Interview Notes, William C. Stair, Mss. 57, Camp Papers, BYU (microfilm, Box 3); Camp Field Notes, Folder 78. Camp Papers, BYU (Hammer Collection, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument); Trooper Dennis Lynch said that Tom Custer killed the dog. Ibid., Notebook 9, No. 6, p. 378). Sergeant John Ryan recalled that other dogs were killed, too, for fear that their barking would arouse the camp. One he mentioned was dispatched with a picket pin through the head (although the animal, amazingly, recovered from the wound). *Ten Years*, p. 51.

above the ridge and seemingly hovering directly above the Cheyenne camp momentarily brought consternation and anxiety among the officers until it was correctly identified.[52] Meantime, far below, the Indian village hardly stirred in the freezing morning twilight, oblivious to the danger lurking just moments away.

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[52]Custer's report, November 28, 1868; Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, pp. 234-39; Godfrey, "Washita Battle," pp. 489-90; Henry Langley account in *Winners of the West*, December 15, 1925; Brewster account in *The National Tribune*, August 22, 1901; Godfrey account in undated newspaper (ca. 1895) in W.J. Ghent Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Ben Clark stated that Custer termed the phenomenon "The Star of the Washita," and said that it forecasted victory. *New York Sun*, May 14, 1899. Modern astronomical calculations indicate that what Custer and his men saw very likely was Mercury, which in its celestial orbit was especially bright on November 27, 1868. Venus, often referred to as the Morning Star, had risen that day more than three hours before sunrise and so was already too far above the horizon to fit the historical description. Data provided by Mort Wegman-French on January 14, 2001, using Home Planet software for Windows, Release 3.1, January, 2000.

Chapter 7: Washita

As daylight grew, the troops with Custer's battalion received orders to remove their greatcoats, haversacks, canteens, and blankets rolls so they might move more freely. Then they mounted and advanced to positions behind the ridge.[1] West's squadron formed in line on the right; Custer, his staff, and the regimental band--numbering but sixteen men--took the center, while Hamilton's squadron arrayed on the left. Cooke's sharpshooters, dismounted, arranged themselves in skirmish formation in advance of Hamilton's companies. Officers passed the word not to fire until the signal was given to do so. (The units of Elliott, Thompson, and Myers had earlier been instructed to advance on the camp as closely as practicable before daylight; Myers was also to approach with one-half of his command dismounted.) Then the companies crested the ridge and at a walking gait began their descent in their relative positions toward the village, approximately half a mile away, Custer and the regimental band advancing in the center of the line. Presently, they reached a lower ridge, where they halted briefly, poised to renew the advance in the growing daylight.[2] Dogs in the village were now yelping furiously at the soldiers,

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[1]Godfrey stated that "the sun came up brightly" before the attack commenced. Camp Field Notes in Hammer Collection, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, Notebook 8, Folder 36. One man of each company remained with the discarded dunnage with orders to load them in Bell's wagons when they arrived. Godfrey, "Washita Battle," p. 490; Godfrey account in undated letter, WA-2, Thoburn Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society. File 11, Box 33, 86.01. Some of the sharpshooters complained and cursed at the directive to remove their overcoats, bringing a rejoinder from Custer to "stop that noise." Camp interview with Dennis Lynch, undated. Walter M. Camp Papers, Brigham Young University Library, Provo, Utah (copy in the Kenneth Hammer Collection, Notebook 9, No. 6, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, Crow Agency, Montana.

[2]This low ridge is in the southeast quarter of Section 2. Lees *et al*, "Archaeology of the Washita Battlefield National Historic Site," p. 19.

but still no one stirred in the lodges, and a fleeting fear passed through some of the officers that the camp was deserted like that at Pawnee Fork. The movement of the horses over the crusted snow proved noisy, and on reaching the Indian herd, the ponies quickly turned away from the columns. More animals were located on the hillsides south of the village, while others were picketed among the lodges. Captain West rode over to Godfrey, with Company K at the extreme right of the line, and told him to charge through the camp and round up the herds. Then the troops closed on the white tipis scattered beyond the thickly growing timber along the Washita. Smoke could be seen emanating from the tops of some of them. The trumpeters sounded, "Charge!" Then, as Custer turned to signal the band leader, a shot ripped through the morning air, fired from a point across the camp, and immediately the band struck up the opening strain of the Seventh's marching song, "Garry Owen." At that instant, from all sides, the troops rushed toward the village.[3]

In a moment, all was tumult. Cooke's sharpshooters pulled farther to their left, opening a corridor for the cheering troops with Custer who, momentarily slowed by the steep banks, came splashing across the Washita on a northwest-to-southeast diagonal directly into the Cheyenne camp, shooting into and through the tipis.[4] Awaking in the shock of the attack, the warriors and their families, many unarmed, scrambled out of their lodges attempting to run before the

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[3]Custer's report, November 28, 1868; *New York Herald*, December 8, 1868; Custer, *My My Life on the Plains*, pp. 239-40; Mangum, "Muster Roll 7th Cavalry, Washita Battle"; *The Daily Oklahoman*, November 23, 1930; Godfrey account in undated newspaper (ca. 1895) in Ghent Papers; *Kansas City Star*, December 4, 1904; Godfrey, "Washita Battle," p. 490. Godfrey maintained that the shot was fired by an Indian, aroused by the dogs, at a soldier of Elliott's command somewhere on the east end of the camp. Ibid.

[4]Godfrey stated that the soldiers, shooting through the lodges, "took no care to prevent hitting women." Godfrey Interview, March 3, 1917. Camp Papers, BYU, Box 3 (microfilm).

thundering onrush of the army horses. Almost abruptly, the band's instruments froze up in the icy air, the measured notes replaced by a cacophony of shooting, screaming, barking, and yelling, accompanied by the pounding din of hundreds of horses' hooves storming over the frigid terrain.[5] Custer led the attack of the larger battalion, his black stallion bounding across the river and into the camp where he fired at one tribesman and ran his horse over another as he, accompanied by Ben Clark, streaked through the camp and up the southern slope to a point on elevated ground about one-quarter mile beyond the stream. There he took position on a rising hillock to oversee and direct movements on the field. In the opening melee, the soldiers of West and Hamilton galloped into the camp and discharging their pistols at the people fleeing in all directions. One of the first army casualties was Captain Hamilton, who, riding on Custer's left, was heard to call to his men to "keep cool, fire low, and not too rapidly," shortly before a Cheyenne bullet found it's mark, knocking him dead from his saddle.[6]

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[5]A soldier who joined the Seventh Cavalry in 1870 maintained that the band's playing "Garry Owen" at the Washita had by then become considered "out of place" and a matter of ridicule and joking among veterans in the regiment. Bruce R. Liddic and Paul Harbaugh (eds.), *Camp on Custer: Transcribing the Custer Myth* (Spokane, Wash.: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1995), pp. 36-37. It seems doubtful that the sixteen bandsmen could have played their instruments much while galloping hell-bent into the village. Ben Clark remembered that "the musicians had little time for music. Their horses became uncontrollable in the rush and rumble of the charge, and a number of the musicians were drawn into the very teeth of the fight." *Kansas City Star*, December 4, 1904. At least one veteran remembered that "the band was stationed at the crossing of the creek" when the attack began. Langley account in *Winners of the West*, December 15, 1925. Barnitz, writing close to the event, said that the band was on a ridge (see below). *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 225.

[6]"In Memoriam," pp. 372-73. Barnitz wrote that "Hamilton was killed near the stream, as I was told, on the left flank of Custer's command--among the trees, or bushes bordering the stream and but a few hundred yards in front of my position occupied by my dismounted men." Barnitz to Camp, November 29, 1910. Camp Papers, BYU, Box No. 1, Folder 14 (microfilm). Custer indicated that Hamilton fell "as we entered the village." *My Life on the Plains*, p. 246. Godfrey claimed that Hamilton was the *first* soldier killed in the engagement. Edward S.

The component battalions simultaneously entered the fray. From the west and south, Myers and Thompson drove toward the village, but Thompson's cavalrymen, late to arrive, failed to extend their enclosing line on the east, opening a wide gap between them and Barnitz's troopers through which many of the people escaped.[7] Myers's column acted primarily as a containment force. And Barnitz's soldiers, positioned on a low plateau behind a swale full of tree stumps, did not directly drive into the camp, but after the initial attack by the mounted commands, the dismounted reserves "followed [them in] with more deliberation to support the

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Godfrey, "Notes on Chapter XXII of Colonel Homer W. Wheeler's 'Buffalo Days.'" Godfrey Family Papers Indian Wars. Accounts Written or Annotated by E.S. Godfrey, Sr. Box 16. U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. Captain West's memorial of Hamilton in the *Army and Navy Journal*, January 2, 1869, stated that he "fell dead from his horse, shot by a bullet from a Lancaster rifle in the hands of a savage, who was concealed in his wigwam." Hamilton was struck in the chest. The surgeon's report noted that the "ball entered about five inches below left nipple, and emerged near inferior angle of right scapula. Death was instantaneous. "Special Report. Officers Killed at the Battle of the Washita, Indian Territory, November 27, 1868." NA, RG 94. Records of the Adjutant General's Office. The *New York Herald*'s account of the engagement published on December 24, 1868, said that Hamilton, when hit, "gave one convulsive start" and fell from his horse "striking on his face, which was from this cause, terribly lacerated and disfigured." An army shell jacket purportedly worn by Hamilton when he was killed reposes with the Oklahoma Historical Society, donated by Hamilton's brother in 1908. Oklahoma Historical Society to Allan McLane Hamilton, August 27, 1908, and response, August 27, 1908; Collections Inventory Control Sheet No. 4339, Oklahoma Historical Society. It seems likely that the damage present in this garment was moth-, rather than gunfire-, inflicted. See also, *Kansas City Times*, November 25, 1908. There is certain speculation that Hamilton was killed by his own men, and that his death occurred before the Indians had started any return fire (see, Brill, *Conquest of the Southern Plains*, p. 160, fn 1), although the surgeon's notation above indicated that the officer was hit in the front, not the back, as he led his men in on the attack.

[7]Godfrey claimed that both Myers and Thompson, befuddled in the approach through the darkness, failed to coordinate their movements for the opening charge. "Washita Battle," pp. 490-91. The route of the escapees lay east of some mounds or buttes in the eastern half of the southwest quarter of Section 12. Lees *et al*, "Archaeology of the Washita Battlefield National Historic Site," p. 20.

attack and to complete the victory."[8] Barnitz believed that his movements in the brush east of the camp and south of the river were responsible for opening the attack when they spooked a number of Cheyenne herders, possibly boys, who ran toward the village. Barnitz's dismounted troopers followed them, but did not fire. "We had just reached the edge of a shallow ravine beyond which we could see the clustered tepees, situated among wide-branching cottonwood trees, when a shot was fired in the village, and instantly we heard the band on the ridge beyond it strike up the familiar air 'Garry Owen'. . . ."[9] Barnitz also described the charge of Benteen's squadron as the men galloped in line from the northeast. Thus largely hemmed in from all directions, many of the people, warriors among them, ran to the riverbank and jumped in the freezing waist-deep water, turning to fire defensively over the bank at the soldiers. Other men, women, and children fled down the river and into the stream finding refuge behind a large chunk of earth that had collapsed into the river from erosion and now formed a natural barricade paralleling the north bank. Still others sought protection in ravines and behind trees, fallen logs, and driftwood where they might attempt some form of counterattack with their meager resources. The Indians, said Custer, fought "with a desperation and courage which no race of men could surpass." From near their lodge on the west end of the encampment, Black Kettle and his wife together mounted a single pony and started for the Washita. Reaching and entering the stream, they were knocked

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[8]Edward S. Godfrey, "The Seventh Regiment of United States Cavalry." Undated (circa 1898?) typescript draft manuscript, unpaginated. Godfrey Papers, Box 6. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

[9]*Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 225.

off the animal and into the water, killed by soldier bullets.[10]

Within minutes of the assault, the troops controlled the village. The tribesmen, scattered among the surrounding topography, fought back as best they could against the soldiers who rooted them out of lodges and hiding places. Some of the women came at the troopers brandishing pistols and were shot. One group of women and children tore across the rising prairie southwest of Custer's command knoll pursued by men from Captain Myers's command who were shooting at them, "killing them without mercy," said Clark. "I was riding to the south, when I came in view of fully half of Myers's men, chasing the panic-stricken women and children." The scout immediately brought Custer's attention to the activity, asking the colonel if the people were to be killed, whereupon Custer directed Clark to immediately intervene, halt the pursuit, and take the captives to a guarded lodge in the mostly deserted camp.[11] Some noncombatants, however, remained in their lodges throughout the attack, passing the anxious moments singing likely prayer songs. According to Ben Clark, much of the killing of women

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[10]George Bent to Samuel Tappan, March 15, 1889. Manuscript 617, Samuel Tappan Papers, Colorado Historical Society, Denver; Bent to George E. Hyde, August 1, 1913. Bent-Hyde Correspondence, Coe Collection, Yale University Library. The spot where Black Kettle and his wife were killed, was identified by two Cheyenne participants, Magpie and Little Beaver, in 1930. See certification sheet, September 19, 1930. U.S. Army Field Artillery and Fort Sill Museum, Fort Sill, Oklahoma. A soldier named Joseph Lemon, Company H, claimed to have killed the chief and taken his Remington revolver and a silver ring, an unlikely assertion since Benteen's company was so far to the east at the opening of the assault, when Black Kettle and his wife seemingly died. *Kankakee Sunday Journal*, February 17, 1952.

[11]*Kansas City Star*, December 4, 1904; Custer later wrote: "Before engaging in the fight, orders had been given to prevent the killing of any but the fighting strength of the village; but in a struggle of this character it is impossible at all times to discriminate, particularly when, in a hand-to-hand conflict, such as the one the troops were then engaged in, the squaws are as dangerous adversaries as the warriors, while Indian boys between ten and fifteen years of age were found as expert and determined in the use of the pistol and bow and arrow as the older warriors." *My Life on the Plains*, p. 241.

and children lay with the Osages. They "shot down the women and mutilated their bodies, cutting off their arms, legs and breasts with knives."[12] Presently, the camp area was largely cleared, many of the occupants having fled downstream pursued by cavalry. However, as one trooper recalled years later, "the real fighting . . . began when we attempted to dislodge them from ravines or ambush."[13] Other people took refuge in the woods bordering the stream, and officers directed their men to dismount and advantage themselves of the terrain in rooting them out. The sharpshooters apparently took part in this activity, working their way far downstream clearing out pockets of resistance. Gradually, the troops' firing proved too much, and those who escaped this shooting joined others behind the stream bank. At the place where the people were hidden behind the length of collapsed embankment, the sharpshooters killed a number of noncombatants, including women.[14] Farther downstream, however, a party of warriors occupied a ravine, driven there by Barnitz's dismounted line, with only their heads visible when they raised up to fire at the soldiers. This group succeeded in registering a number of casualties among the troops, and it was only after Cooke's sharpshooters leveled rounds at them from

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[12]*New York Sun*, May 14, 1899. Clark reported that "the shooting of the women and children was done, but by the twelve Osage Indian scouts." Letter, August 30, 1909, in *Overland Monthly*, November, 1909. See also, Brill, *Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 156-57. On the other hand, Godfrey remembered that a private named Elihu F. Clear shot and killed a woman during the charge through the camp. Godfrey interview, March 3, 1917. Box 3, Camp Papers, BYU (microfilm).

[13]C.S. Munsall, "The 7th U.S. Cavalry at the Battle on the Washita," *Nebraska History*, 7 (October-December, 1924), p. 123.

[14]Camp interview with Dennis Lynch, undated. Walter M. Camp Papers, Brigham Young University Library, Provo, Utah (copy in the Kenneth Hammer Collection, Notebook 9, No. 6, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, Crow Agency, Montana.

concealed positions that they were all killed.[15] As a matter of policy, throughout the field, any wounded Indians discovered by the soldiers were promptly shot to death.[16] Once the village was secured, Custer sent the interpreter Romero to the lodges with assurances that the women and children would not be harmed. These noncombatants were collected in the designated tipis. "This was quite a delicate mission," wrote Custer, "as it was difficult to convince the squaws and children that they had anything but death to expect at our hands."[17] Custer later talked to the prisoners to assure them of good treatment; through the sister-in-law of Black Kettle, named Mahwissa (Red Hair), he learned the identification of the camp, and presumably of the death of the chief, as well as that of Little Rock, in the attack. Meantime, the surgeons established a hospital in the center of the camp, and the wounded as well as the fatalities, Hamilton among them, were brought for their attention.

While the attack unfolded, some of the troopers went after the ponies. California Joe

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[15]An untitled diagram map drawn by Ben Clark on August 27, 1897 indicates that the tribesmen made two major stands along the river during the encounter, one at the approximate apex of the bend enclosing most of the lodges, and the other farther downstream, a short distance beyond the bend. Hugh Scott Papers. Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress. Although unexplained on the map, these were likely the incidents involving the women behind the earthen barricade, as well as the seventeen warriors in the depression. Cooke's sharpshooters seemingly engaged both bodies of Cheyennes. For what was apparently the latter incident, see Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 225.

[16]Foley, "Walter Camp & Ben Clark," p. 22. Clark addressed this apparent policy thus: "As wounded Indians were supposed to or known to fight as long as they could, all of the wounded Indians in this fight were promptly shot to death by the soldiers without discrimination as to appearance of danger, just exactly as Indians would have treated wounded soldiers." Clark did not indicate whether this practice was confined to men or extended also to women, although he accounted for a wounded boy about twelve years old being taken prisoner. "This was the oldest male captured." Ibid.

[17]*My Life on the Plains*, p. 244.

employed two captive Cheyenne women in rounding up nearly three hundred of the animals. They were tightly guarded to prevent their recapture or stampede by the warriors. Lieutenant Godfrey, meantime, followed his instructions from West to seize the ponies. On fording the Washita west of the village, he reformed his platoon of about twenty men and rode directly through the camp after the herds, although many of the animals had run toward the lodges during the alarm. Godfrey assembled a herd on the slopes south of the camp, then, sighting some dismounted tribesmen running away on the north side of the valley, he left the herd in the custody of Lieutenant Law and crossed to that side of the Washita and started downstream along the ridges looking for the escaping Indians. Godfrey's platoon followed a trail for perhaps three miles. When accompanying sergeants admonished him about proceeding too far, Godfrey mounted a promontory to scan the valley.[18] He was shocked to see hundreds of lodges of the lower camps, and large numbers of warriors moving rapidly in his direction. Godfrey trotted away, but soon came under fire of the warriors. He halted his men, returned the fire, then laid out a skirmish line, and began a steady withdrawal from ridge to ridge back toward the Cheyenne village. As he recalled:

> Under the cavalry tactics of 1841, the retreat of skirmishers was by the odd and even numbers, alternating in lines to the rear. I instructed the line in retreat to halt on the next ridge and cover the retreat of the advance line. This was successful for the first and second ridges, but at the third I found men had apparently forgotten their numbers and there was some confusion, so I divided the

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[18]The likely promontory mounted by Godfrey in sighting the villages below lies in the northeastern quarter of Section 32, Township 14 North, Range 23 West. Lees *et al*, "Archaeology of the Washita Battlefield National Historic Site," p. 22.

skirmishers into two groups, each under a sergeant, and thereafter had no trouble.[19]

As the troops withdrew, they could hear sharp firing to the south and across the Washita; trees and vegetation obscured from the men the source of all the shooting in that quarter. The Indians finally fell away from Godfrey's front, and the lieutenant completed his movement and reported his sightings to Custer, who seemed surprised in the knowledge of the lower camps and questioned him intently about what he had seen. He later told the colonel about the sounds of heavy firing that had drawn his attention to the south bank, and that the profusion of trees near the river had screened any view of activity there. Suggesting that the shooting might be related to a group headed by Major Elliott that had earlier gone in that direction and might be fighting downstream, Godfrey was informed by Custer that Myers had been fighting in that vicinity, and that the shooting probably came from his action.

But the reality was that Elliott was probably under attack. He and Barnitz had seen a large body of Indians racing from the village and passing their left flank over some sand hills toward ponies ranging southeast of the village. Barnitz ordered his men to fire on the people, then sent Sergeant McDermott and his mounted soldiers to head them in the direction of Thompson's column, anticipated to arrive from the bluffs to the southwest. Attempting to locate Thompson's squadron, Barnitz spurred his horse to pass through the running Indians and learned that they were elderly women, some carrying children. Some had babies on their backs, while others dragged children along by their arms. He saw one woman with a child straddling her neck as she ran while leading two others with her hands. While his troops rounded up these

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[19]"Washita Battle," p. 492.

noncombatants (forty-eight women, according to Barnitz), the captain continued southeast, following some running warriors. As he approached, two unleased arrows at him, and he shot both. A third man discharged a rifle at him, wounding the captain as he simultaneously fired, hitting the Indian. The injured Barnitz then turned back as his soldiers pursued the other warriors. Barnitz slowly rode toward the village, finally paused on a hilltop, dismounted, and crawled into a depression with the clear expectation that he was dying. Later, some of Barnitz's men found him, placed him on a buffalo robe and transported him to the hospital area where Drs. Lippincott and Renicke, both under the effects of snowblindness, pronounced his wound fatal.[20]

Meantime, in an attempt to corral some Indians seen fleeing from the village through the unclosed gap between his command and that of Captain Thompson, Elliott and regimental Sergeant Major Walter Kennedy assembled a group of sixteen volunteers, who took off downstream after the tribesmen. Ben Clark recalled seeing Elliott standing atop a hill east of where he and Custer had stood at the outset of the fighting.[21] The twenty-eight-year-old major

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[20]Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, pp. 225-28. Barnitz's near-fatal encounter with all of its collateral details are well-documented in the following sources: Barnitz to Thoburn, November 28, 1910. BA-ID Thoburn. .949 86.01. Oklahoma Historical Society; Barnitz Interview, December 5, 1910. Camp Papers, Lilly Library; Godfrey, "Washita Battle," p. 492; Barnitz to Camp, November 29, 1910. Camp Papers, BYU, Box 1, Folder 14 (microfilm); Camp Field Notes, Folder 36S, BYU (Hammer Collection, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, Notebook 8, Folder 36, pp. 179-80); Godfrey interview, March 3, 1917. Camp Papers, BYU, Box 3 (microfilm); John Ryan notes, Camp Manuscript Field Notes, Unclassified Envelope 130 (Hammer Collection, Notebook 6, Envelope 130, pp. 604-05); Despain, "Captain Albert Barnitz," pp. 140-42. Barnitz Creek rises near the modern community of Leedey and runs north-to-south east of the encounter site to join the Washita near present Clinton. See Joseph B. Thoburn, "Names of Oklahoma Streams," *Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine*, 11 (December, 1910), p. 59.

[21]This according to Clark's account in the *Kansas City Star*, December 4, 1904. In his 1910 interview with Camp, Clark stated that he had been standing on the same hill with Elliott and Kennedy. Foley, "Walter Camp & Ben Clark," p. 20.

stood with Kennedy looking through his field glasses at a number of men and boys hiding in the timber below, then called for troops to accompany them and took off.[22] It was between 9 and 10 a.m. Reportedly, Elliott had shouted to Lieutenant Hale, "Here goes for a brevet or a coffin!" as he galloped away in the lead.[23] The men continued east along the south side of the Washita valley for some distance and apparently had captured a number of refugees. But at a point along the river approximately two and one-half miles east of the village and near the confluence of the tributary now called Sergeant Major Creek, Indians from the downriver camps converged from the timber on Elliott's small force from several directions. It is not known if in his peril Elliott grasped the import of the Indians coming against him from the east. The men tried to hide in tall grass, but the warriors closed in, shooting bullets and arrows from a distance, then rushed the position, leaving Elliott and his entire detachment dead.[24]

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[22]Clark stated that he heard Elliott exclaim, "There's a lot of escaping Indians; come on boys, let's take 'em in." Those who joined the major "did so of their own accord." *New York Sun*, May 14, 1899.

[23]Godfrey stated that "my recollection is that this remark was made to Lieut. Hale." "Notes on Chapter XXII of Colonel Homer W. Wheeler's 'Buffalo Days.'" Godfrey Family Papers Indian Wars. Accounts Written or Annotated by E.S. Godfrey, Sr. Box 16. U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. In another reference, it was stated that "Gen. Godfrey did not hear it himself but always insisted that officers told him afterwards that Elliott said, 'Here's for a brevet or a coffin.' Godfrey could not remember the officer or officers who made this statement to him, but it was on the day of the engagement." "Battle of Washita, Nov. 27, 1868." Charles F. Bates Papers, Research Files, 19th Century Army, 1868 Campaign Misc., Collection No. S-1314, Series III, Book 16, Folder No. 237. Beineke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

[24]*New York Sun*, May 14, 1899; *Kansas City Star*, December 4, 1904; Camp interview of Clark, 1910, in Foley, "Walter Camp & Ben Clark," pp. 20, 22; Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, pp. 246-47; Hunt, "Subjugation of Black Kettle," pp. 106-07. Clark stated that "Elliot [was] killed in SE 1/4 of Sec 5, Township 13 north, Range 23 west. It is 2 ½ miles straight east of Black Kettles village." Foley, "Walter Camp & Ben Clark," p. 22.

As indicated, the Elliott fight, though presently unknown to Custer, presaged a delicately unfolding situation. Godfrey had reported the existence downstream of great numbers of lodges, and increasingly cognizant of the events ongoing at Black Kettle's camp, hundreds of Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Kiowa warriors from those camps gradually began ascending the heights bordering the north side of the stream, cautiously approaching to discover what was happening. Custer's women prisoners confirmed that other wintering camps lay less than four miles downstream, and he quickly realized that, despite his troops' success in seizing the Cheyenne camp, his position was by no means secure. As the afternoon wore on, he watched concernedly through an eyeglass the mounting numbers of armed, war bonneted figures perched on ponies atop the hills bordering the valley floor in several directions, believing that their attack was all but inevitable. Custer realized that with his prisoners and wounded, and with the large numbers of ponies and captured property--to say nothing of his own diminishing ammunition supply--, he would be unable to press forward toward the downstream villages. The latter predicament was rectified with the arrival shortly before noon of Lieutenant Bell with the wagon train. After Benteen's departure from the train to join Elliot, Bell's wagons and their tiny escort had advanced on the trail for about one-half mile. At the sounds of shooting, Bell again moved forward, but was delayed crossing the Washita approximately one mile above the village. Then, following on Custer's trail, he ascended the steep grade and saw the ongoing fighting below. Finally, Bell's train penetrated a loose cordon of warriors arriving from the downstream camps. These people disrupted the effort to reclaim the soldiers' greatcoats and equipments left behind in the initial advance, and the items were confiscated by the Cheyennes while the train, drawn by galloping mules, raced down the crusted slope, forded the stream some distance west of the fighting, and

entered the village. The wheels of one of the wagons was in flames because of friction on the tarred axle, and on reaching the lodges troops overturned the vehicle to save the ammunition, using snow to extinguish the fire.[25]

Following Bell's arrival, ammunition was distributed to the troops. Determined to finish his business in the village, Custer now threw out lines of skirmishers beyond the camp to watch and engage the distant warriors.[26] The remainder of his command he set to destroying the camp of fifty-one lodges and all of its contents that might be of value to the Indians. By this time the village was littered with clothing, blankets, and robes tossed by the fleeing people. The soldiers

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[25]Bell to Camp, July 28, 1911. Box 1, Folder 19, Camp Papers, BYU; Barnitz to Joseph B. Thoburn, October 29, 1910. BA-1B Thoburn, 947, 86.01. Oklahoma History Society, Manuscripts Division; Godfrey interview, March 3, 1917. Box 3, Camp Papers, BYU (microfilm); Camp to Godfrey, November 13, 1919. Godfrey Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Lees *et al*, "Archaeology of the Washita Battlefield National Historic Site," p. 21. Bell maintained that he did manage to retrieve about one-half of the overcoats. Bell interview, no date. Camp Manuscripts, Box 2, Folder 1, Field Notes, Topics A-L, Lilly Library (Hammer Collection, Notebook 4, No. 1, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument); Gibson stated that Bell and the train arrived "about an hour after the fight began." "Battle of the Washita," p. 18. With Bell was Custer's cook, an Irish woman named Courtenay, who reportedly somehow made coffee on a portable camp stove in one of the ambulances during the frenetic advance to the village. Bell interview notes. Camp Manuscripts, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Field Notes, Box 2, Folder 1. (Hammer Collection, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, Notebook 4, No. 1).

[26]Company C, under Lieutenant Berry, composed at least part of the skirmish line. According to Clark, the Indians continued shooting into the camp from the area where they had confiscated the soldiers' overcoats, whereupon Custer sent Berry to dislodge them. Berry then remained in that position overlooking the village from the northwest. Untitled diagram map by Clark, August 27, 1897; Ben Clark account, *New York Sun*, May 14, 1899; Foley, "Walter Camp & Ben Clark," p. 20. The troops' opposition to these flank attacks by the warriors may help explain the archeological discovery of numerous expended Spencer cartridge casings on the ridge overlooking the pony kill site about 400-500 yards northeast of the present overlook. See Lees *et al*, "Archaeology of the Washita Battlefield National Historic Site," pp. 48-49; William B. Lees, "Archaeological Evidence: The Attack on Black Kettle's Village on the Washita River," *Journal of the Indian Wars*, 1 (Spring, 1999), pp. 36-37, 39.

now toppled the lodges (although one particularly handsome one was packed into a wagon for Custer[27]), and their contents of dried meat and other food, flour, clothing, coffee mills, kettles, frying pans, hatchets, axes, weapons, powder, and ammunition were piled together and consumed in several raging bonfires. Looting by the soldiers was not permitted because it would encumber their march. During the emptying and burning of the lodges, the men purportedly found evidence of the village's complicity in the Kansas raids, including unopened mail, photographs, and various household goods taken during the attacks on the settlements. Clark stated that he saw "four white and three Indian scalps" in the camp. Lieutenant Godfrey's Company K accomplished much of the destruction:

> I began . . . at the upper end of the village, tearing down tepees and piling several together on the tepee poles, set fire to them. . . . As the fires made headway, all articles of personal property--buffalo robes, blankets, food, rifles, pistols, bows and arrows, lead and [percussion] caps, bullet molds, etc.--were thrown in the fires and destroyed.[28]

From the raging flames, the sounds of exploding powder and ammunition punctuated the day, and as the blackened smoke from the fires filled the valley, the warriors from the lower camps glowered intently from the hills surrounding the north side of the valley. Some challenged the soldiers to come get their overcoats, then opened a series of mounted feints toward the soldiers'

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[27]*Mariposa Gazette* (California), February 12, 1869, citing Field Correspondence, *New York Herald.*

[28]"Washita Battle," p. 493. For an enumeration of items supposedly found in the village pointing to the Indians' involvement in the Kansas raids, see, Sheridan's report, November 11, 1869, in *Report of the Secretary of War, 1869*, p. 48.

line, as if trying to penetrate the prostrated skirmishers, but in each instance they kept their distance. Custer now went on the offensive, sending squadrons under Benteen, Myers, and Weir (who had succeeded Hamilton) to advance on the tribesmen, and the adversaries traded charges, the squadrons supporting each other in the movements until the warriors finally fell back and away.[29]

Realizing that Elliott and his men had not returned, and on reports of brief shooting having been heard from downriver, Custer dispatched Captain Myers downstream to try and locate the major's party. Custer queried other officers about the major's whereabouts without gaining any precise knowledge, while Myers reportedly searched for two miles, then returned without success.[30] "I had previously given him up as killed," Custer recalled, "but was surprised that so many of the men should be missing, and none of their comrades be able to account for them. All the ground inside of the advanced lines held by the Indians who attacked us after our capture of the village was closely and carefully examined, . . . but with no success."[31] Mindful of his train resting at the South Canadian, Custer also feared that if he remained at the Washita camp overnight the warriors would discover and attack the advancing wagons and their eighty-man escort. Then there was the matter of the large number of Cheyenne livestock, consisting of

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[29]John Ryan wrote that when the warriors took position on the other side of the village, Custer placed the women prisoners along that side, causing the warriors to stop firing from that direction. *Ten Years*, pp. 55-56.

[30]Referring either to Myer's movement downriver during the engagement, or to that officer's search downriver after the fighting, Godfrey remarked, "I learned afterward that he did not go down the valley any distance else he would have discovered Elliott." Godfrey to unidentified recipient, unknown date. WA-2. Thoburn Collection, Box 33, File 11 86.01. Oklahoma Historical Society.

[31]*My Life on the Plains*, p. 257.

ponies, horses, and mules. As Custer explained:

> By actual count we had in our possession 875 captured ponies [and mules], so wild and unused to white men that it was difficult to herd them. What we were to do with them was puzzling, as they could not have been led had we been possessed of the means of doing this; neither could we drive them as the Indians were accustomed to do. And even if we could take them with us, either the one way or the other, it was anything but wise or desirable on our part to do so, as such a large herd of ponies, constituting so much wealth in the eyes of the Indians, would have been too tempting a prize to the warriors who had been fighting us all the afternoon, and to effect their recapture they would have followed and waylaid us day and night, with every prospect of success, until we should have arrived at a place of safety.[32]

Now armed with an abundance of ammunition following Bell's arrival, Custer gave orders to slaughter the herd.[33] The animals had been difficult to capture and manage, and instinctively recoiled at the soldiers' presence, frantically trying to escape. Details of the men now corralled the beasts, drove them to a position beneath a high bluff southeast of the village, then waited while the women prisoners and Osage scouts--as well as some officers (including Custer)--

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[32]*My Life on the Plains*, p. 249.

[33]Bell claimed to have advised Custer to destroy the herd. When the colonel demurred for want of ammunition, Bell told him that he had brought 20,000 rounds with him. Bell interview notes. Camp Manuscripts, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Field Notes, Box 2, Folder 1. (Hammer Collection, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, Notebook 4, No. 1).

selected a number to accommodate their needs.[34] After attempts to kill the spirited beasts by slitting their throats failed, four companies of dismounted cavalrymen shot them to death. Ben Clark remembered that the animals "were bunched against the steep bank south of the village."[35] The destruction of the ponies lasted at least one and one-half hours and "was done by platoon shooting." Far across the Washita Valley, warriors observed the killing of the animals, enraged at what they saw happening.[36]

During the attack, a number of incidents occurred to, or were witnessed by, members of the army command that contribute to knowledge of the Washita engagement. In one, near the outset of the charge, Captain Benteen, while leading his squadron forward, encountered a

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[34]Barnitz very specifically stated that two ponies were selected for each of the women, while each officer claimed two ponies. *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 228. These latter were probably intended to replace broken down horses within the companies, as was suggested by Lieutenant Gibson. "Battle of the Washita," p. 18.

[35]*New York Sun*, May 14, 1899. Trooper Dennis Lynch claimed that sharpshooters from Company F killed the herd. Camp Papers, BYU (Hammer Collection, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, Notebook 6, Envelope 130, p. 601). Likewise, Lieutenant Bell recollected that "Troop F . . . fired volley after volley until all [were] shot down." Camp Manuscripts, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Field Notes, Box 2, Folder 1. (Hammer Collection, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, Notebook 4, No. 1).

[36]Captain Benteen reported that Custer took the opportunity to shoot dogs from the Indian village. Benteen letter in the *St. Louis Democrat*, as republished in the *New York Times*, February 14, 1869, in William A. Graham (ed.), *The Custer Myth: A Source Book of Custeriana* (Harrisburg, Pa.: The Stackpole Company, 1953), p. 212. The pony kill took place south of the village and against the face of the sharply rising bluff. The site was identified by a Cheyenne participant, Magpie. "His identification of the location was confirmed by Frank Turner, the pioneer settler . . . and also by Alvin Moore, an attorney of Cheyenne and member of the Oklahoma senate, whose father once owned the land upon which the battlefield stands. Frank Turner said long after he had staked his claim north of the battlefield he watched freighters load bones of these animals into huge wagons to be taken to Texas and sold for fertilizer." *The Daily Oklahoman*, November 23, 1930. See also, interview with William Boyd, in "Indian and Pioneer Histories" (1930s Federal Writers' Project, Oklahoma Historical Society), vol. 91, p. 92.

mounted Cheyenne youth, about fourteen years old, who rode directly at the officer and twice discharged a revolver at him. Benteen initially regarded the boy as a noncombatant and hesitated in his response. But the youth continued to fire at the captain, and one shot wounded his horse; with all sense of appeal gone, and with the boy reaching for another pistol, Benteen leveled his own revolver at him and fired, killing him. (This Cheyenne has been tentatively identified as Blue Horse, a twenty-one year old nephew of Black Kettle.)[37] In another instance, Lieutenant H. Walworth Smith raced through the camp followed closely by an enlisted man. While passing a group of women wrapped in blankets, Smith instructed the man not to fire on them, when suddenly one of the "women" let loose an arrow that struck the man in the temple then slid around slicing through his scalp. The soldier managed to stay mounted and passing by sent a bullet into the Indian, whom it was discovered was an elderly man equipped with bow and arrow. According to Custer, the man took the Indian's scalp.[38] During the engagement, Ben Clark witnessed a Mexican captive of the Cheyennes named Palar (or White Bear) carry a little girl to the soldiers. Delivering her over to a sergeant who told him to run, the man turned and started

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[37]Custer, My Life on the Plains, pp. 241-43; New *York Herald*, December 24, 1868; Gibson, "Battle of the Washita," pp. 20-21; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, p. 317; Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, I, 604-05.

[38]*New York Herald*, December 24, 1876; Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, pp. 256-57. Both sources stated that the wounded man was a trumpeter, but official casualty lists indicate that the only bugler (sic--trumpeter) wounded was John Murphy of Company M, who received an arrow would in the thorax. The only possible recipient of the injury described was Private Daniel Morrison, of G Company, who was hit in the right temple, and whose injury required a "cold water dressing." "List of Wounded in the 7th U.S. Cavalry under command of Bt Maj Genl Custer USA, at the Battle of the Washita Indian Territory on the 27th day of November, 1868." NA, RG 94, Office of the Surgeon General.

away whereupon the sergeant shot him in the back, killing him.[39] And an incident reported in the *New York Herald* accounted for an Osage scout who was in mourning for the recent loss of his wife. Once the shooting began, one of the other scouts who was aware of this fact took action to help his comrade get beyond his grief. The warrior, "having shot a Cheyenne, rushed upon his fallen foe and in an instant with his knife severed the head from the body. With a wild whoop he took the ghastly object to the mourning warrior and threw it down before him. The warrior seized the trunkless head and in an instant had the scalp." Thereafter, the sorrowed warrior was in the midst of the fray with his fellows.[40]

By late in the day, the extrication of his command from what appeared to be a steadily worsening situation from Indians from the downriver camps now became paramount. "We had achieved a great and important success over the hostile tribes," wrote Custer. "The problem now was how to retain our advantage and steer safely through the difficulties which seemed to surround our position."[41] As dusk settled, the men prepared the dead and wounded for the journey ahead; all, including wounded Cheyenne women and children, were placed in the wagons. Cavalry trumpets recalled the scattered force into the area of the village, the soldiers mounted, the band struck up "Ain't I Glad to Get Out of the Wilderness," and with guidons flying and skirmishers leading the way, the regiment crossed to the north side of the Washita and

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[39]Ben Clark in *New York Sun*, May 14, 1899; Foley, "Walter Camp & Ben Clark," p. 20; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, p. 317; Grinnell to Camp, October 3, 1916. Camp Papers, BYU, Box 2, Folder 2 (microfilm).

[40]*New York Herald*, December 24, 1868.

[41]*My Life on the Plains*, p. 249. Ben Clark maintained that Custer had earlier planned to follow, and presumably engage, the warriors of the downriver villages. *New York Sun*, May 14, 1899; Brill, *Conquest of the Southern Plains*, p. 17n3.

started downstream toward the other villages. "I . . . had recourse to that maxim in war which teaches a commander to do that which his enemy neither expects nor desires him to do," stated Custer. Godfrey, who knew where the villages stood, rode with Custer at the head of the column of fours in the advance. Ben Clark recalled how the column was arrayed:

> The regiment was drawn up in close marching order. Three hundred yards ahead of the advance guard of one troop were the scouts. A quarter of a mile in the rear of the advance guard was another troop, close behind which were the captives on ponies. Then came the main body of the troops, the wagon train and the rear guard.[42]

During the advance, flankers were thrown out along the side of the Washita to guard against surprise from the woods and to keep watch for Elliott's men. (The soldiers passed by Elliott's dead obliviously, since they lay beyond view in the growing dusk on the south side of the Washita.) Initially, the Indians rode forward to make repeated feints against the soldiers. The wounded Barnitz from his ambulance saw "painted aboriginees [sic], bedecked with war-bonnets, as they made desperate charges, in efforts to stampede the mules."[43] But the troops effectively countered these thrusts, dismounting and kneeling as they delivered their rounds against the warriors. Finally, believing that the soldiers were about to assault their camps in the same manner as they had Black Kettle's, and perhaps afraid that shots directed against the column might hit the prisoners, most of the Indians on the hills quickly dispersed down the valley

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[42]*New York Sun*, May 14, 1899.

[43]Barnitz to Thoburn, November 28, 1910. BA-1D Thoburn, .949 86.01. Thoburn Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society.

to their homes. Then, under cover of darkness, after slowly passing several miles down the valley, but at a point well short of actually sighting the camps, Custer pulled in his skirmishers and quickly took the back trail, leading his command past the field of the late engagement and northwestwardly up the Washita in a forced march to reach the wagon train.[44] The troops hurried on for perhaps a dozen miles until 2 a.m., when, in apparent security, they halted to rest, Custer sending Captain West's squadron forward to find and support the train. The Osages took the occasion to fire several volleys over their scalp collection, ostensibly to rid the area of the spirits of the slain.[45] Resuming the push at dawn on the 28th, the troops joined the wagon train at about 10 o'clock. Stopping but briefly while the teams were harnessed, Custer continued his withdrawal northeast until early afternoon, crossing the Canadian and probably halting somewhere in the vicinity of upper Hackberry Creek.[46] No Indians were seen on the return march. At this well-picketed camp, the men pitched tents, unsaddled their weary mounts, and downed their first substantive meals in almost two days. From this camp, after querying his officers for data about Indian casualties, Custer dispatched Milner and Corbin to General Sheridan bearing the first word of his regiment's attack on, and destruction of, the Cheyenne

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[44]Rea, "Washita Trail," pp. 256-58. The point on the Washita where Custer presumably turned about was later known as "Custer Bend." *The Custer County Post-Dispatch*, date??? Keim, who was not present, wrote in his dispatch that "after traveling a distance of eight miles the column returned to the scene of the fight." *New York Herald*, December 8, 1868. Custer's plan for extricating his command from the proximity of Black Kettle's village by initially marching toward the downriver camps and then withdrawing under cover of darkness has been credited to his chief of scouts, Ben Clark. Brill, *Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 177-78.

[45]*New York Herald*, December 24, 1868.

[46]Rea, "The Washita Trail," pp. 255-57.

village.[47]

The Indian perspective of the Washita attack generally parallels that of the soldiers and helps round out the knowledge of the event. Most of the Cheyenne narratives describe what happened to individuals when they came under fire from the troops and how they dealt with the emergency circumstances that confronted them. Following Black Kettle's return from his meeting with Hazen, a number of people in the village, including the chief's wife, urged the camp to pick up and move, and, according to one source, some of the youngsters were removed to Whirlwind's downstream camp.[48] But the majority of village occupants remained as they were before Custer's attack. At dawn on the 27th, some of the people got news of the soldiers' approach. Moving Behind, who was fourteen years old at the time, remembered people calling to others to wake up, that the soldiers were coming. But as they did so the assault commenced. "At

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[47]Beyond the quoted and explanatory material cited above, this account of the Washita engagement has been constructed from the following sources: *New York Herald*, December 8, 1868; *New York Times*, December 29, 1868; Custer's report, November 28, 1868; Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, pp. 240-61; Custer, *Following the Guidon*, pp. 41-45; Barnitz to Camp, November 29, 1910. Camp Papers, BYU Box No. 1, Folder 14 (microfilm); Clark account in *Kansas City Star*, December 4, 1904; Clark account in *New York Sun*, May 14, 1899; Gibson, "Battle of the Washita," pp. 17-19; Godfrey reminiscence in a clipping from an unidentified newspaper, ca. 1897-98. Ghent Papers, Box 24, File 16. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Godfrey Interview, March 3, 1917. Camp Papers, BYU, Box 3 (microfilm); Godfrey, "Washita Battle," pp. 490-95; Godfrey statements, Camp Field Notes, Notebook 8, Folder 36, BYU (Hammer Collection, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, pp. 179-80, 183, 185, 186); Ryan, *Ten Years*, pp. 52-58; Brewster account in *The National Tribune*, August 22, 1901; Edward S. Godfrey, "Notes on Chapter XXII of Colonel Homer W. Wheeler's 'Buffalo Days.'" Godfrey Family Papers Indian Wars. Accounts Written or Annotated by E.S. Godfrey, Sr. Box 16. U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. Hunt, "Subjugation of Black Kettle," pp. 105-06. Thorough secondary accounts appear in Brill, *Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 160-79; Leckie, *Military Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 100-05; and Utley, *Cavalier in Buckskin*, pp. 67-71.

[48]Account of Red Bird (Lone Wolf), aka Stacy Riggs, in Thomas Benton William, *The Soul of the Red Man* (Privately published, 1937), p. 240.

that instant," said Moving Behind, "the soldiers let out terrible yells, and there was a burst of gunfire from them." The young girl joined her aunt, Corn Stalk Woman, outside her lodge. She could see the people racing about frantically, and noted that "Black Kettle and his wife were last seen when they rode off on a horse."[49] Another Cheyenne woman who was about sixteen years old at the time recalled that a man named Double Wolf was supposed to be watching at night but fell asleep. When the commotion started, he was expected to raise a white blanket-flag, but instead fired his weapon. In the charge, Double Wolf was one of the first killed. The Cheyenne woman remembered the following pandemonium that erupted:

> We all ran out of our tepees and tried to run out through the narrow entrance. We saw white men in front of us motioning us to go back. Then the battle began. I don't know which side started shooting first. I fell on my face in the snow and could hear nothing but guns. At last the shooting stopped, and the next thing I knew a soldier punched me with his gun and motioned to me to get up. There were several other women lying close to me. Men, women, and children lay dead everywhere. I saw many of the warriors lying dead with their guns in their hands.[50]

Regarding Black Kettle's death, the chief was warned of the imminent danger by a woman running through the camp. He fired a shot from his rifle to awaken the people still

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[49]Theodore A. Ediger and Vinnie Hoffman, "Some Reminiscences of the Battle of the Washita," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 33 (Summer, 1955), pp. 138-39.

[50]Account of Mrs. Lone Wolf, in James L. and Ellen Puckett, *History of Oklahoma and Indian Territory and Homeseekers' Guide* (Vinita, Okla.: Chieftain Publishing Company, 1906), pp. 99-100.

sleeping, then reached for the pony tethered at his lodge. A man named Bearmeat Face described the chief and his wife, Ar-no-ho-wok (Woman Here After, according to Bent, but also translated as Medicine Woman Later), mounting an iron-gray horse, "but the horse was badly frightened by the great firing and the morning excitement" so much that they could not get away quickly. They tried to make it to the ford to cross to the north side, but the soldiers were already storming through the brush near the stream. Then the horse they were riding was shot in the right hind leg, and Black Kettle and his wife were killed. The chief was hit in the stomach, and another shot struck him in the back, between the shoulder blades. Nonetheless, they fell in the water, the horse struggling to reach the far bank, where it died. Bearmeat Face then fled and joined a young woman escaping with her baby, then helped conduct other noncombatants to safety.[51]

The men grabbed their weapons, dashing out of the lodges to meet the soldiers' onrush. Some tore around trying to find places to mount a defense. Moving Behind told how one man, Statue, astride his horse, berated the leaders for leaving the women and children behind as they ran. Many of the noncombatants panicked, running every which way and screaming and crying as the yelling soldiers charged through them. Some, however, remained in the tipis as the troops raced around outside, hoping they would be safe there. Numbers of people finally ran to the Washita and jumped in the freezing water, seeking protection from the bullets under the banks of the stream. Some tried to wade downstream, but the soldiers found them and shot many in the

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[51]Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, I, 602-03; Brill, citing Magpie, in *Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 155-56; Untitled account of Bearmeat Face, dated January 22, 1910, in Barde Collection, Oklahoma History Society; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, pp. 316-17; Bent to Hyde, August 1, 1913. Bent-Hyde Correspondence, Coe Collection, Yale University Library.

water.[52] In the chaos, Moving Behind joined her aunt in getting through and south of the camp and seeking refuge in the tall grasses there. She described her own escape as follows:

> Many Indians were killed during the fight. The air was full of smoke from gunfire, and it was almost impossible to flee, because bullets were flying everywhere. However, somehow we ran and kept running to find a hiding place. 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. In this grass we lay flat, our hearts beating fast; and we were afraid to move. It was now bright daylight. It frightened us to listen to the noise and the cries of the wounded. When the noise seemed to quiet down, and we believed the battle was about to end, we raised our heads high enough to see what was going on. We saw a dark figure lying near a hill, and later we learned it was the body of a woman with child. The woman's body had been cut open by the soldiers."[53]

During the opening charge of the soldiers, Cranky Man came out of his lodge on the west of the camp. He lifted his rifle and fired, hitting a soldier, possibly an officer. Then Cranky Man stood in front of his lodge firing at the soldiers until their bullets dropped him. Two others, Red Shinn and Medicine Elk, also met the charging troopers in the village, firing at them until the soldiers forced them to flee into the woods and bushes, where the two continued shooting at the

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[52]Ediger and Hoffman, "Some Reminiscences," p. 139; Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, I, 603-04.

[53]Ediger and Hoffman, "Some Reminiscences," p. 139.

soldiers racing about the camp. Elsewhere, dismounted soldiers closed in on groups of men and boys congregated behind fallen trees and the river bank, killing some and forcing others from their cover before shooting them, as well. Many of these warriors joined others in the stream as they tried desperately to hold off the soldiers. Women and children sought the protection of the banks, too, including that offered by the large piece of collapsed earth on the north side of the stream. There, as the people fell at the hands of the troopers, one woman, in a helpless rage, stood up with her baby, held it out in an outstretched arm, and with the other drew a knife and fatally stabbed the infant--erroneously believed by the soldiers to be a white child--then plunged the blade into her own chest in suicide.[54]

Afraid for their lives, other women in the camp broke and ran out to the southeast. The Osages, who had already killed and mutilated some of the women and children, rode after them, grabbing limbs from trees and brush with which to whip their quarry back into the village. Yet some people managed to escape. Three people, Big Man, Magpie, and Pushing Bear, were in the west part of the village when the soldiers struck. They ran farther west, then south, finally encountering the troops of Myers's battalion who shot at them, slightly wounding Magpie, who kept moving. Somehow, Big Man became separated from the others. Magpie and Pushing Bear remained to the south, finally heading toward a ridge in that direction that would protect them when a lone soldier spied them and closed on them. The soldier swung his saber at the youth, who ducked and then shot him with a pistol. Magpie and Pushing Bear then mounted the

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[54]Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, I, 604-06; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, p. 317; Clark accounts in *New York Sun*, May 14, 1899, and *Kansas City Star*, December 4, 1904. Custer described the incident as involving a "little white boy, a prisoner in the hands of the Indians. . . ." *My Life on the Plains*, p. 243-44.

soldier's horse and rode away. A group of soldiers then spotted them and briefly rode toward the two Cheyennes, but their attention was shortly diverted to a group of women and children who were running to the east. Pursuing them, the soldier party--which was headed by Major Elliott--came upon and killed an old Cheyenne man and a youth named Crazy, then continued their pursuit of the party of women and children.[55]

Cheyenne accounts of the demise of Elliott and his party are vital to any determination of what happened to these soldiers after they left the area of the village and headed east after the group of women and children. The Cheyennes they were trying to overtake included She Wolf (also known as Packer), Little Rock, Trailing the Enemy (a Kiowa), Little Beaver, the twelve-year-old son of Wolf Looking Back, three unidentified children, three women (two of them White Buffalo Woman and her sister), and two very young men, Blind Bear and Hawk. All were a considerable distance east of the camp and were crossing open ground when the troopers discovered them and started in pursuit. The two young men started running to draw the soldiers away from the women and children. But the soldiers went immediately to the women and children, pausing for a few moments, then most of them started after Blind Bear and Hawk, now far ahead. Sergeant Major Walter Kennedy remained to escort the women and children back to the village. As he did so, Little Beaver attempted to pull a revolver on him, but was foiled and turned it over. White Buffalo Woman devised a ruse to slow the party, binding the bleeding feet of the children while allowing a rescue party from the downriver camps to approach. As

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[55]Brill, *Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 161-63; Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, I, 606-07. It has been surmised that the soldier shot by Magpie was Captain Albert Barnitz, although the accounts contain notable differences. See Brill, *Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 303-05.

Kennedy and the party moved west toward the village, a number of warriors fell in between them and Elliott's group, which had gone to chase the two young men. These were four Arapahos from Little Raven's downriver camp--Little Chief, Tossing Up, Kiowa, and Lone Killer--and they suddenly appeared from the trees near the river on Kennedy's right. Kennedy fired at the attackers, then bolted away on his horse, attempting to get another round into his carbine, while the women and children broke away and ran for the river. The Arapahos soon overtook the sergeant major, however, counting coup on him and finally pulling him from his mount and killing him.[56]

Meantime, Elliott and the rest of his volunteer party had overtaken and killed Blind Bear and Hawk at a point beyond present Sergeant Major Creek, then started after another group of more than twenty women and children emerging from the timber near the river to trek across the open terrain.[57] Little Rock, She Wolf, and Trailing the Enemy accompanied the noncombatants and had protected their flight from the village. As Elliott's men engaged the three tribesmen, Little Rock received a bullet in the head, killing him. Retrieving Little Rock's gun, the other two

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[56]An alternate account of the killing of Kennedy had the warriors coming out the timber from the west as they fled the onslaught in the village. They rushed the sergeant and one, a Cheyenne named Bob Tail Bear, tomahawked him. George Bent to Robert M. Peck, ca. 1906-07, in Hadley, "Nineteenth Kansas Cavalry," p. 444, fn10.

[57]A skeleton unearthed during early twentieth century railroad construction work was thought to be that of Hawk based on ornaments found and on Magpie's reminiscence of the burial spot. The remains were buried south of the village site in 1930. Brill, *Conquest of the Southern Plains*, p. 307. Two other Indian skeletons that surfaced during the road work remained in a deteriorating gunny sack in the basement of the newspaper office until rediscovered in 1987 and buried by the Cheyennes in 1988. See undated clipping, *Sayre Record*, and clipping from an undated, unidentified newspaper, ca. late June, 1988, in John L. Sipes, Jr., Collection, 88.32, Box 15, File 216 (temp), Washita Massacre, Folder 1, Oklahoma Historical Society.

proceeded after the women and children, firing on the soldiers as opportunity allowed. Presently, the Indians gained the river again, and dropped down behind the bank, the Kiowa warrior appearing occasionally to level gunfire at Elliott's troopers. Suddenly a large number of warriors appeared, riding toward the soldiers from downriver. Upstream, the four Arapahos who had dispatched Kennedy, now joined by five more--Left Hand, White Bear, Black Bull, Yellow Horse, and Two Wings--converged on the scene. These nine men quickly moved up and posted themselves to prevent Elliott's retreat to the village, while at the same time driving the soldiers back from the river into open country. Then the Arapaho warriors charged the troopers, who had dismounted to fire at them, encircling them and shooting at them. Neither side scored any hits, however. As the warrior charged again, some of the army horses broke away. Then the troopers advanced on foot toward the Indians, firing volleys at them; still none of the warriors were struck.

Gradually, the number of warriors increased with the arrival of Cheyennes, Kiowas, Arapahos, and Kiowa-Apaches from the downriver camps, many cutting directly across the sweeping north loop of the Washita to reach the action, and before long Elliott's party was pressed back farther in the direction of where Kennedy had earlier been killed.[58] All of the army horses had by now been killed or stampeded away. Shortly, Elliott and his soldiers sought protection in the tall grass growing along the east side of present Sergeant Major Creek, where it

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[58]Indians later told army officer Hugh L. Scott that "Elliott and his men could easily have escaped during some little time before [they] were completely surrounded. The Indians at first came up straggling along as they got their mounts and for some time were not strong enough to attack the soldiers. They expected the soldiers to leave, but they did not and held their ground until overwhelmed." Scott interview. Camp Papers, BYU. Hammer Collection, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, Notebook 7, No. 4.

made a sharp bend before continuing east to enter the Washita.[59] At this place, approximately one and one-half miles east of Black Kettle's village, the troopers lay down in the grass in a circle, facing and firing at the warriors all around them. Some of the men raised their carbines up over their heads and fired blindly without exposing themselves. From near the head of the ravine, a Cheyenne named Man Riding on A Cloud (Touching the Sky) gathered some other warriors and began shooting into Elliott's men at close range, hitting some of them. At this, the mounted warriors moved closer. Roman Nose Thunder, a Cheyenne youth, swept in on horseback, racing his mount directly through the cluster of soldiers, touching one and claiming first coup, although he was wounded in the effort. An Arapaho, Tobacco, is also credited with having scored the first coup, but he was killed as he rushed through the group. Simultaneously, more warriors were approaching the troopers by moving up the ravine on their hands and knees, but before they succeeded in this mission, more mounted warriors rushed the men. But for Sergeant Major Kennedy, all of Elliott's men perished within minutes.[60] Several Indians received wounds during this latter fighting, but only one, Single Coyote, an Arapaho, was

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[59]Clark stated that the men tied their horses together before beginning to fight the warriors. *St. Louis Republic*, January 2, 1911.

[60]In 1905, George Bent described the last moments of Elliott's men as recalled by participants: "When Elliott seen he was surrounded he turned all his horses loose and got into hollow with his men among tall grass. The Indians say . . . they could only see smoke from their guns when they shot. Soldiers were laying down in high grass. Indians got all around them and very close. The Indians soon found out that Elliott's men were firing wild so they closed in on them. Before the soldiers could get up from lying down they had them all killed. The Indians say to this day they do not know who counted "coes" [sic--coups] on Maj Elliott and Liet [sic] Hamilton as they all jumped on them same time. Roman Nose Thunder . . . first counted "coe" on soldier (private). He was very first to run in on them. Then the big crowd jumped on them." Bent to Hyde, September 11, 1905. Bent Ms. 34, Letter 16. Colorado Historical Society.

mortally injured.[61] The fight with these soldiers reportedly lasted about two hours, with Big Mouth, an Arapaho, leading the final attack. Following the killing of Major Elliott and his volunteers, the tribesmen, including the women who had earlier hidden behind the river bank, stripped and mutilated the bodies.[62]

The warriors who wiped out Elliott and his soldiers belonged to the same bands as those seen by Lieutenant Godfrey during his withdrawal along the north side of the river from his

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[61]Hugh Scott learned that an Arapaho named Smokes Road (aka Tobacco?) also was killed attacking Elliott's men. Scott to Godfrey, July 2, 1931. Godfrey Collection, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

[62]This account of the destruction of Elliott's party is drawn from the following sources: Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, I, 607-13, 681-82; Brill, *Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 161-70, 305-06 (containing the accounts of Little Beaver and Left Hand); Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, pp. 302-05; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, pp. 318-20; Bent to Peck, in Hadley, "Nineteenth Kansas Cavalry," p. 441; Account of Red Bird (Lone Wolf), aka Stacy Riggs, in Williams, *Soul of the Red Man*, pp. 240-41; Frank Rush, "What Indian Tongues Could Tell," *Wilds and Waters*, 2 (December, 1930), pp. 13, 27-34; Foley, "Walter Camp & Ben Clark," p. 23; Virginia Cole Trenholm, *The Arapahoes, Our People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), pp. 227, 242; Wilbur S. Nye, *Carbine and Lance: The Story of Old Fort Sill* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, third ed., rev., 1969), pp. 66-68. A Cheyenne account that places Kennedy's death last is in Puckett, *History of Oklahoma*, pp. 102-03; *The Daily Oklahoman*, July 27, 1930. An account that stresses the Kiowas' role in the Elliott affair is that of Tahan (Joseph K. Griffis), "The Battle of the Washita," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 8 (September, 1930), p. 278. Another, less credible, account of Elliott's demise purportedly given by Little Raven is in Robert M. Wright, "Reminiscences of Dodge," *Kansas Historical Collections*, 9 (1905-1906), p. 72. According to Clark, the site of Elliott's engagement is in the southeast quarter of Section 5, Township 13 North, Range 23 West. Foley, "Walter Camp & Ben Clark," p. 22. The Indian accounts strongly suggest that the site is east of the former big bend of Sergeant Major Creek, in the area of the extreme east edge of Section 7 or the west half of the northwest quarter of Section 8. Lees, *et al*, "Archaeology of the Washita Battlefield," pp. 24-25. However, Fred S. Barde placed the site in the northwest corner of the southeast quarter of Section 7. See "Map of the Washita Battle Ground." Map 2 (township and range), Barde Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society. In addition, modern Cheyenne perspectives of the Washita attack, many of them as recalled by descendants of participants, appear in Mary Jane Warde, "Final Report on Cooperative Agreement 1443CA125098002 Modification 1, Conduct Oral History Research for Washita Historical Site, September 30, 1999" (copy on file in the National Park Service Intermountain Support Office, Santa Fe).

sojourn looking for village escapees, during which he had seen one or more of the camps. Warriors approached his platoon from Little Raven's village and began shooting at the soldiers. As the retirement proceeded ridge to ridge, both sets of belligerents heard the roar of musketry south of them across the Washita, most likely from the attack then occurring on Elliott's men. The warriors facing Godfrey eventually pulled back, joining those who were ascending the hills above Black Kettle's camp from which they harried Custer's troopers late in the afternoon. Several hundred warriors gathered to participate in the activity, many wearing warbonnets and carrying lances and coupsticks. These people came from the villages of Little Raven, Medicine Arrow, Whirlwind, and had raced forward on learning of the attack against Black Kettle from Cheyenne refugees of the assault straggling into their camps. Together, the warriors opened a sporadic attack against the troops, managing to capture the overcoats and haversacks left by the men of West's and Hamilton's battalions and Cooke's sharpshooters at the time Bell's wagons penetrated their cordon as they raced to join Custer. Later, these same Indians made repeated feints against army skirmishers positioned around the camp. They taunted the soldiers, waving some of the overcoats and haversacks, trying to entice them to come out, but the troops did not respond. Instead, the warriors watched in exasperation as the soldiers looted the tipis of dried buffalo meat, flour, tobacco, richly ornamented clothing, sacred shields, robes and hides, bows and arrows, and weapons and ammunition, among other camp equipage. The soldiers pulled down the lodges, heaped them into many piles, then set it all afire. The warriors, incensed at the loss happening before them, opened fire on the soldiers, but the troops responded forcefully and drove the Indian observers away beyond carbine range. Late in the day, the troops destroyed the pony herd, delivering a final indignity to the distantly watching tribesmen. Then the soldiers

arranged themselves in marching order and struck out as if to attack the lower villages, causing the warriors on the hills to disperse to their camps.[63]

Moving Behind and her aunt, Corn Stalk Woman, still hidden in the grass south of the village, watched and waited as the ponies ran by, many of them wounded and moaning loudly "just like human beings" as the soldiers drove them to the killing place. "The snow on the whole bend of the river was made red with blood," recalled another woman. Later, they watched as the regiment pulled away across the Washita headed toward the lower camps, then, mounted, went to the spot near the river where Black Kettle and his wife had fallen. They saw the bodies of the chief and his wife submerged beneath the surface, together with that of the horse that they had been riding. Some of the men dragged the Indians' bodies out of the water and placed them on a blanket. Then the party moved on, encountering the corpses of other dead tribesmen. "We would stop and look at the bodies, and mention their names," said Moving Behind.[64]

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[63]Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, I, 614-17.

[64]Ediger and Hoffman, "Some Reminiscences," pp. 140-41; Puckett, *History of Oklahoma*, p. 100. Beyond the materials specifically cited above, this account of the Washita encounter from the Indian perspective has been compiled from the following sources: Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, pp. 300-05; Rush, "What Indian Tongues Could Tell," pp. 11-13, 27-34; *The Daily Oklahoman*, July 27, 1930; *The Daily Oklahoman*, November 23, 1930; interview with Joe Yellow Eyes, 1937, in "Indian and Pioneer Histories" (1930s Federal Writers' Project, Oklahoma Historical Society), vol. 52, p. 125; interview with Red Bird, 1937, in ibid., p. 228 (published in *The Watonga Republican*, May 28, 1997); and account of Red Bird (different man from above) in *The Watonga Republican*, June 25, 1997; Nye, *Carbine and Lance*, pp. 64-70. At least one purported Indian account, that of a white captive of the Kiowas, maintained that the warriors were planning to ambush Custer's command as it headed downriver, apparently at some point above the various camps. Tahan, "The Battle of the Washita," p. 280. See also the narrative/compilation presented in Harrison, "Eyes of the Sleepers, pp. 1-24; and John L. Sipes, Jr., "Mo-chi, Cheyenne Warrior Woman: The Story of Buffalo Calf Woman," in *The St. Francis Herald*, August 30, 1990. Modern oral histories containing Washita-related material include those of Jess Rowlodge, Arapaho, March 26, 1967, in the Doris Duke Oral History Collection, Indian Institute, University of Oklahoma; and Colleen Cometsevah, Southern Cheyenne, August

Official army casualty figures for the Washita engagement, filed in January, 1869, after determination of Elliott's fate had been made, listed two officers (Elliott and Hamilton) and eighteen enlisted men (seventeen with Elliott) killed, and three officers (Barnitz, Thomas W. Custer, and March) and twelve enlisted men wounded. Two of the wounded enlisted men subsequently died of their injuries, making a grand total of twenty killed and thirteen wounded. (Two of the dead enlisted men were brothers, Carson D.J. Myers and John Myers, both of Company M and killed with Elliott.)[65] Some especially light casualties were customarily not formally reported during the Indian campaigns, so that the true number of wounded likely exceeded the figure given officially.[66] On the field, much was made over the popular Hamilton's death; borne to the hospital area by a guard of honor, his body was viewed by many of the officers and men who felt his loss personally. Hamilton's remains were removed to Camp Supply, where, on December 4 a full military funeral ensued, with Sheridan, Custer, and Lieutenants Crosby, Cooke, Hale, Thomas Custer, and Captain William M. Beebe, Jr., serving as

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20, 1999, in Mary Jane Warde, "Final Report on Cooperative Agreement 1443CA125098002 Modification 1, Conduct Oral History Research for Washita Historical Site" (report prepared for the National Park Service. Oklahoma Historical Society, 1999). See also, "Summaries of Interviews," in ibid.

[65]"Special Report. Officers Killed at the Battle of the Washita, I.T., November 27, 1868"; "Special Report. Enlisted Men Killed at the Battle of the Washita, Indian Territory, November 27, 1868"; and "List of Wounded in 7th U.S. Cavalry under command of Bvt. Maj. Genl Custer, U.S.A. at the Battle of the Washita, Indian Territory, on the 27th day of Novr 1868." All of the above enclosed in Assistant Surgeon George A. Otis to Colonel Charles H. Crane, Assistant Surgeon General, January 16, 1869. NA, RG 94. Records of the Adjutant General's Office. See also, Custer's report, November 1, 1869, p. 46; and Gibson, "Battle of the Washita," pp. 25-26. See Appendices A and B for more complete listings of casualties.

[66]As example, Private Henry Langley of Company C claimed to have received two slight wounds "in the left wrist, and in the left leg above the knee," neither of which appeared on the casualty lists. Langley letter in *Winners of the West*, December 15, 1925.

pallbearers. Hamilton was temporarily buried at Camp Supply. On January 21, his remains were sent to Fort Dodge, Kansas, arriving there on the 24th. From there they were forwarded for burial in the family plot in Poughkeepsie, New York.[67] Meantime, the supposedly fatally wounded Barnitz improved during the following weeks. Dr. Lippincott, on first examination, thought that the captain's intestine had been injured from the Cheyenne bullet, and that Barnitz would die. On December 8, at Camp Supply, Lippincott operated and removed a mass of tissue from the wound, and Barnitz eventually recovered.[68]

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[67]See Custer to Mrs. Hamilton, August 29, 1869; a tribute by Captain West that appeared in the *Army and Navy Journal*, January 2, 1869; West to Philip Hamilton, December 6, 1868, transmitting a resolution regarding Hamilton's loss; an account of the funeral; and other tributes; all appearing in "In Memoriam," pp. 362-86; AAG Department of the Missouri to Sherman, January 11, 1868. Sheridan Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Microfilm reel 76; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 243. The resolution appeared in the *New York Herald* and the *Army and Navy Journal* on December 26, 1868. The Camp Supply funeral was described as follows: "The body was carried in an ambulance [serving] as a hearse and covered with a large American flag. In advance of the ambulance marched Hamilton's squadron commanded by Brevet Lieutenant Colonel T.B. Weir, followed by Captain Hamilton's horse, covered with a mourning sheet, and bearing on the saddle the saber and belt and reversed top boots of the dead soldier." *Kansas City Times*, November 25?, 1908. A similar account is in the *New York Herald*, December 26, 1868. See also, Custer's account of the funeral in Custer, *Following the Guidon*, p. 45. Of the six pallbearers given above for Hamilton's remains, four subsequently met similar deaths while fighting Indians. However, the *Kansas City Times*, November 25?, 1908, listed the pallbearers as: Sheridan, Custer, Captain Custer, Beebe, Weir, Crosby, and West.

[68]Barnitz's wound was described in detail by his close friend, Lieutenant Godfrey, in a letter of December 5, 1868, to the captain's wife, Jennie. "The ball entered his left side on a line with the left groin and about four inches above the navel; coming out on the left side of the spine cutting the top of his pants. The wound is one that rarely occurs without cutting the intestines, and that was what was at first appeared to be the case." Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 229. See also the description in *New York Herald*, December 24, 1868. A clinical description of Barnitz's operation is in War Department. Office of the Surgeon General. *Circular No. 3* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1871), pp. 250-51. The injury forced Barnitz's retirement in 1870. When he died in 1912, doctors discovered a growth coalescing around the old Washita wound had contributed to his demise; a piece of his overcoat was also found inside his body, driven there by the Cheyenne bullet forty-four years earlier. Barnitz, *Life in Custer's*

Losses among the approximately 250 Cheyennes at the Washita have been more difficult to ascertain. Custer reported 103 warriors killed and fifty-three women and children taken prisoner.[69] The former figure, however, was based on what appears to be the pooled recollections of his subalterns after they stopped on the afternoon of November 28 following their withdrawal from before the downriver villages; Custer later revised the figure upward, claiming that "the Indians admit a loss of 140 killed, besides a heavy loss of wounded. This, with the Indian prisoners we have in our possession, makes the entire loss of the Indians in killed, wounded, and missing not far from 300."[70] Custer's figures were inflated, and the specific sources of his information remain unknown. Evidently, no accurate field count of Indian casualties occurred. As might be expected, the best estimates of Indian casualties must come from the people who suffered the losses, yet even these do not agree. Custer's prisoners later reported that thirteen men, besides two Sioux and an Arapaho, had been killed at the Washita, but evidently gave no figure for noncombatant losses. Months later, Special Agent Vincent Colyer and Colonel Grierson learned from several of the Cheyennes, including Little Robe, Minimic (Bald Eagle), Gray Eyes, and Red Moon, that thirteen men, sixteen women, and nine children died at the Washita, a figure that is keeping with what the prisoners said and is seemingly plausible.[71]

Cavalry, pp. 243, 247.

[69]Custer's report, November 1, 1869, p. 46.

[70]Custer's report, December 22, 1868, p. 9; 40th Congress, 3rd sess., *Senate Executive Doc.* 40, p. 9, as cited in Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, I, 683n50.

[71]*New York Herald*, December 24, 1868; Sheridan to AAG, Division of the Missouri, December 3, 1868, in U.S. Senate, 40 Cong., 3rd sess., Ex. Doc. No. 18, p. 31; Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, p. 300n4, citing *Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1869* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1869), pp. 525, 823. Other government officials reported between

Similarly, Magpie and Little Beaver claimed that twelve warriors died in the fighting whose names they knew, although possibly two or three more were also killed, together with many women and children.[72] These accounts compare well with casualty figures researched by George Bent. In 1913, Bent provided the names of eleven Cheyenne men who died in the attack, besides figures of twelve women (two of whom were Sioux) and six children, for a total of twenty-nine people killed. Later, he added two Arapaho men as fatalities and dropped one child, bringing his total to thirty killed. In an apparent final revision in 1916, Bent listed thirteen men killed. Assuming that his figure for noncombatant fatalities did not change, Bent's final list of killed at the Washita totaled twenty-nine, a number that does not appear unreasonable.[73] Given this likely figure, the number of wounded Cheyennes fleeing the Washita camp probably at least doubled

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nine and twenty men killed, and between eighteen and forty women and children killed. Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, p. 328, citing *Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners, Appointed by the President Agreeably to Section Fourth of the Act of Congress Making Appropriations for the Current and Contingent Expenses of the Indian Department for 1869* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1871), pp. 42-43; James S. Morrison to Wynkoop, December 14, 1868. LR, Upper Arkansas Agency. NA, RG 75. Records of the Office of Indian Affairs; Bent to Hyde, August 28, 1913. Bent-Hyde Correspondence, Coe Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

[72]Brill, *Conquest of the Southern Plains*, p. 16n2.

[73]Bent to Hyde, August 28, 1913. Bent-Hyde Correspondence, Coe Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University; Bent to Grinnell, October 2, 1913. Grinnell Collection, MS.5, Folder 56.2. Braun Research Library, Southwest Museum, Los Angeles; Bent to Camp, December 4, 1916. Camp Papers, BYU, Box 2, Folder 2 (microfilm). In the lists accompanying the last two cited letters, the names of several of those killed are not identical. See also, Grinnell to Camp, October 3, 1916. Camp Papers, BYU, Box 2, Folder 2 (microfilm). Cheyenne researcher John L. Sipes compiled a list accounting for thirty-four named individuals (men and women), one unidentified Comanche, and five unnamed children killed at the Washita. John L. Sipes, Jr., Collection. 88.32, Box 15, File 216 (temp), Washita Massacre, Folder 1. Oklahoma Historical Society. See Appendix B for a tentative casualty list, based upon the Bent and Sipes enumerations, that accounts for fifty-eight possible Indian fatalities.

this number, and likely stood at somewhere around sixty.[74]

Beyond the dead and wounded among the Cheyennes, there were the losses represented in the people taken captive during the engagement. When Custer marched his command away from the Washita village, fifty-three women and children accompanied him, eight of whom were wounded and others sick. Each waking day and each night en route to Camp Supply the women, who knew nothing of their ultimate fate, sang their dirges. One morning, Lieutenant Godfrey was responsible for moving the prisoners along. One of them asked permission to leave the column temporarily, and Godfrey obliged. After a lengthy absence, during which the lieutenant feared that the young woman might have run off, she reappeared, galloping forward on horseback to present herself and her newly born child to the relieved officer. "Instead of losing a prisoner, I had gained one," remembered Godfrey. The captives remained with Custer's command until after they reached Camp Supply. Eventually they were transferred to Fort Hays, where a stockade facilities had been prepared for them.[75]

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[74]This figure is based on a presumption, common though not universal during the Indian wars, that the number of wounded exceeded the number of fatalities in combat, especially where numbers of noncombatants were involved, as in surprise army attacks on villages. This presumption lies in knowledge of the remarkable ability of the tribesmen to survive extremely severe wounds that might be considered fatal in other populations, as well as in the likelihood that many if not most of the bullets fired by the soldiers struck non-vital parts of their targets if they did not miss altogether. Ben Clark estimated "the Cheyenne loss at seventy-five warriors and fully as many women and children killed. The number of wounded was never known. . . ." *New York Sun*, May 14, 1899. See Appendix B for fifty-eight identified fatalities in the Washita village.

[75]Captain Andrew Sheridan, Third Infantry, to AAG, Department of the Missouri, December 14, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2601, Box 4; *New York Herald*, December 24, 1868; Godfrey, "Notes on Chapter XXII," p. 4. Godfrey Family Papers, Indian Wars. Accounts written or annotated by E.S Godfrey, Sr., Box 16. U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

For his transmittal to Sheridan late on the 28th, Custer had seemingly prepared more precise figures itemizing the village contents than he had figures respecting Indian casualties. He told the general that:

> We captured in good condition eight hundred and seventy-five horses, ponies, and mules; two hundred and forty-one saddles, some of very fine and costly workmanship; five hundred and seventy-three buffalo robes, three hundred and ninety buffalo skins for lodges, one hundred and sixty untanned robes, two hundred and ten axes, one hundred and forty hatchets, thirty-five revolvers, forty-seven rifles, five hundred and thirty-five pounds of powder, one thousand and fifty pounds of lead, four hundred arrows and arrow-heads, seventy-five spears, ninety bullet molds, thirty-five bows and quivers, twelve shields, three hundred pounds of bullets, seven hundred and seventy-five lariats, nine hundred and forty buckskin saddle bags, four hundred and seventy blankets, ninety-three coats, seven hundred pounds of tobacco. In addition, we captured all their winter supply of dried buffalo meat; all their meal, flour, and other provisions; and, in fact, everything they possessed; even driving the warriors from the village with little or no clothing. We destroyed everything of value to the Indians, and have now in our possession, as prisoners of war, fifty-three squaws and their children.[76]

Inexplicably, Custer additionally stated that "we also secured two white children held captive by the Indians. One white woman who was in their possession was murdered by her captors the

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[76]Custer's report, November 28, 1868.

moment we attacked."[77]

For the several wounded soldiers, the jolting ride north was difficult in the extreme. "During the whole time I could not eat one morsel of anything," wrote Barnitz, "and for every spoonful of water that I drank I vomited up two."[78] Following his dispatching of California Joe Milner and Jack Corbin forward with news of the fight, Custer on the 29th continued toward Camp Supply, marching twenty-two miles, probably moving down Bogy Creek to gain Wolf Creek, where the troops and their caravan bivouacked, about ten miles from Sheridan's headquarters.[79] Next day, November 30, specially arrayed for Sheridan's review, the command entered the post in triumph, having fulfilled the general's orders to the letter.

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[77]Ibid. The references to the two white children and the white women killed have never been explained, although it is possible that Custer was referencing a six-year-old boy and a fifteen-year-old girl turned over to Sully by the Kiowas the preceding summer. See Sully to Sherman, December 10, 1868. Sherman Papers, Microfilm Reel 13. Further, a later allusion to the prisoners indicated that a badly wounded "Mrs. Crocker" was among them, but this might have been a Cheyenne woman married to a mixed blood. See J.S. Morrison to Wynkoop, December 14, 1868, cited in Brill, *Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 313-14.

[78]Barnitz to wife, December 5, 1868, in Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 235.

[79]Rea, "The Washita Trail," pp. 257-59.

Chapter 8: End Results

Custer had received Sheridan's congratulatory message by the time his command reached Camp Supply. Borne south by Milner and Corbin and one other scout, it had reached the column along with a package of dispatches and other mail as the troops approached Wolf Creek. The colonel drew his soldiers up in line and read the contents of General Field Orders No. 6 by which the department commander complimented their "energy and rapidity" in seeking out the Indians in severe weather conditions and thanked Custer "for the efficient and gallant services rendered, which have characterized the opening of the campaign against hostile Indians south of the Arkansas."[1] From Wolf Creek, Custer sent word to Sheridan of his proximity, and received in return notification of the general's desire to review the troops on their approach to Camp Supply. The triumphal march was a spectacle to behold. According to Godfrey, the Osage scouts, arrayed in their splendor, singing war songs, and occasionally firing their weapons, preceded the white scouts, who in turn preceded the blanketed prisoners. The band, playing "Garry Owen," followed, and then came Cooke's sharpshooting *corps d'elite* and the remainder of the Seventh Cavalry, arranged in column of platoons. The wagon train brought up the rear. The arrival briefly spooked the post horses, but they were soon controlled. As the victorious column passed by Sheridan, the troopers raised their sabers in a precision salute; the general doffed his hat in return.[2]

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[1]Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, pp. 265-67.

[2]Godfrey, "Washita Battle," p. 496. See also, Custer, *Life on the Plains*, pp. 268-69; Keim, *Sheridan's Troopers*, pp. 121-23; Ryan, *Ten Years*, p. 60; Spotts, *Campaigning with Custer*, pp. 65-66.

Following the celebration, Sheridan and his staff listened as the Seventh's officers described the battle action. Then they saw the evidence from the village that indicated that the Indians had been part of the Kansas raiding, and the general evinced concern over the fate of Major Elliott and his men. Indeed, the presumed loss of Elliott and the soldiers who accompanied him was viewed as the sole immediate defect in the Washita operation. The matter soon became one of nagging controversy; it would not disappear, and elements would haunt the regiment, as well as perceptions of Custer's leadership, for years to come. On December 4, Captain Hamilton's remains, "attired in the full uniform of a captain," were placed in a coffin made of pine boards and buried in a solemn ceremony on the banks of Beaver River. Those of two enlisted men killed and of one who died from wounds were also interred.[3]

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[3]Keim, *Sheridan's Troopers*, p. 125; Custer, *Following the Guidon*, p. 45; Harvey, "Farrier's Diary," p. 87. Harvey suggests that the burials occurred on December 3. George H. Shirk, who edited Harvey's diary, identified the enlisted burials as Privates Charles Cuddy and Augustus Delaney, Company B, Seventh Cavalry, and Private Benjamin McKasey, of Company H, who died at Camp Supply on December 1 from wounds received at the Washita. Ibid. The newspaper correspondent, Keim, who was present, described Hamilton's funeral thus: "The troops formed in the vicinity of the tent in which the body had lain since its arrival at the camp. At two o'clock in the afternoon the roll of muffled drums, the solemn refrain of the band, and the slow step of the pall-bearers, announced that the remains were approaching. The coffin, enveloped in the national colors, was placed in an ambulance. The long line of mourning comrades, in reverse order, broke into column. The squadron of the deceased officer took the advance. Next came the remains, followed by the riderless horse, covered with a morning sheet and [boots and?] spurs reversed. Then the long column of troops and officers, all moving in measured tread towards the grave. . . . The body was lowered into the cold and solitary grave. The burial service was read by a brother officer, and amid volleys of musketry the earth closed upon its dead." *Sheridan's Troopers*, p. 125. Oddly, Keim recorded no description of the enlisted men's interment. Hamilton's remains were later disinterred and removed to Fort Dodge for shipment to Poughkeepsie, New York, at the request of the family. AAG, Division of the Missouri, to Sheridan, December 4, 1868. NA, RG 393, Part I. Entry 2539, Vol. 1; Sherman to Edward D.Townsend, December 8, 1868, in ibid.; Sherman to Townsend, January 9, 1868, in ibid. The enlisted men do not appear in extant cemetery records for Camp Supply, nor are they found in the records of reburials at Fort Leavenworth National Cemetery, Kansas. Reportedly, the first cemetery at Camp Supply washed away in a flood of Beaver River before 1873.

With the return of the troops, Sheridan lost no time in preparing for more action, as was suggested in his congratulatory order. His efforts focused on continuing pressure on the Cheyennes and Arapahos and the other tribes in the wake of the Washita attack. He had already wired Sherman the news of Custer's strike against Black Kettle, whose band "committed the first depredation on the Saline and Solomon rivers in Kansas." From the prisoners, he learned of the composition of the other camps that stood along the Washita, and that the Indians would likely go into Fort Cobb seeking peace. He learned that three white women were among the people who had camped below Black Kettle's village. He hoped, Sheridan reported, that the tardy Kansas troops under Colonel Crawford would soon be in condition to move out. "If we can get one or two more good blows there will be no more Indian troubles in my Department." Sheridan settled on December 7 to resume operations. That would allow men and horses to rest and the supply trains for Camp Supply and the expedition to be refurbished with provisions from Fort Dodge. Ammunition and thirty days' rations would be required for the Seventh Cavalry and the Nineteenth Kansas for a march to the Wichita Mountains and back.[4]

Communication with Bob Rea, Fort Supply Historic Site, March 23, 2001.

[4]Captain Andrew Sheridan to AAG, Department of the Missouri, December 3, 1868. NA, RG 393. Part I. Entry 2601, Box 4; Sheridan to AAG, Military Division of the Missouri, December 3, 1868. Sen. Ex. Doc. No. 18, pp. 44-45. Sheridan to Sherman, November 29, 1868. NA, RG 393. Part I. Entry 2538, Vol. 1 (including quote); Hutton, *Phil Sheridan and His Army*, pp 70-73. Captain Sheridan requested that "One hundred Thousand Rounds [of] Spencer Carbine Ammunition" be requisitioned for delivery in mid-December by Inman's supply train. Sheridan to AAG, Department of the Missouri, December 12, 1868. NA, RG 393. Part I. Entry 2601, Box 4. There were complaints over the quality of the issued ammunition, likely stemming from its use at the Washita. Adjutant McKeever reported that "General Sheridan states that he has been much embarrassed and crippled in his operations against the hostile Indians by the bad quality of the Spencer Carbine ammunition issued by the Ordnance Department, and that not more than one (1) cartridge out of seven (7) will explode. He thinks this is inexcusable and that the Ordnance Department should be called upon for an explanation." AAG, Department of the

While these preparations ensued, General Sherman wired his congratulations to Fort Hays, to be delivered to Sheridan. He regarded Custer's success "as decisive and conclusive. I have no doubt [that] by Christmas he will have all these Indians begging for their lives, when he can turn them over to the management of General Hazen, after having executed every Indian who began this war." Soon Secretary of War John M. Schofield added his appreciation, too.[5] Sherman believed that the defeated tribesmen, along with the Arapahos, Kiowas, and Comanches, would now congregate seeking relief with Hazen at Fort Cobb, and he wrote General Augur that "I think the same process may have to be applied to the Powder River Sioux. . . ."[6] Although Schofield asked that the names of deserving officers and men be forwarded for attention, Custer maintained he could not comply "for the gratifying reason that every officer and man belonging to the expedition had performed his full part" in the campaign. While there was no immediate individual recognition for officers or men following the Washita engagement, Custer deemed the performances there of Lieutenants Robbins and Smith of sufficient merit to drop previous misconduct charges pending against them.[7]

But the overall effusiveness of the military hierarchy's response to news of the Washita

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Missouri, to Colonel William A. Nichols, December 21, 1868. NA, RG 393. Part I, Entry 2538. Vol. 1.

[5]Sherman to Sheridan, December 2, 1868. NA, RG 393. Part I. Entry 2538, Vol. 1; Schofield to Sherman, December 2, 1868. Ibid.

[6]Sherman to Augur, December 4, 1868. NA, RG 393. Part I. Entry 2538, Vol. 1.

[7]Quote in Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, p. 271; Custer to Crosby, December 2, 1868. NA, RG 393. Part I. Entry 2601, Box 1. Years later, six officers were cited for gallantry and bravery in the Washita action. They were Custer, Surgeon Lippincott, Elliott, Hamilton, Barnitz, and Lieutenants Custer and March. *U.S. Army Gallantry and Meritorious Conduct, 1866-1891* (Alexandria, Va.: Planchet Press, 1986), p. 11.

soon became somewhat neutralized with criticism emanating from other quarters of the country as specifics of Custer's attack filtered through the media in the weeks that followed. In his memoirs Custer claimed to have predicted the reaction no matter the outcome:

> If we failed to engage and whip the Indians--labor as we might to accomplish this--the people in the West, particularly along and near the frontier, those who had been victims of the assaults made by Indians, would denounce us in unmeasured terms as being inefficient or lukewarm in the performance of our duty; whereas if we should find and punish the Indians as they deserved, a wail would rise up from the horrified humanitarians throughout the country, and we would be accused of attacking and killing friendly and defenseless Indians.[8]

The principal reproach came from Commissioner of Indian Affairs Nathaniel G. Taylor, his Indian agents, and those politicians who sided with them, a consortium facetiously tagged as the "Indian ring." Taylor and his ally, Colonel Samuel Tappan, who had joined Taylor in the 1867 commission negotiating the Medicine Lodge Treaty, believed that Black Kettle's camp had been friendly, and that Custer's attack on it amounted to but a repetition of the Sand Creek carnage. Members of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs were similarly outraged. Through Taylor, Tappan complained that the attack would promote general warfare throughout the West, that the volunteers sent to support the regulars should be withdrawn and the war policy curtailed. Agent Wynkoop, in the East on leave of absence at the time of the Washita engagement, abruptly resigned his position, protesting, too, that Custer's strike was but a repeat of Chivington's unwarranted butchery of Black Kettle's people. Too, members of the Cherokee, Choctaw, and

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[8]*My Life on the Plains*, p. 270.

Creek tribes--so-called "Civilized Tribes" and regional neighbors of the Cheyennes, protested the Washita affair as "a brutal massacre of friendly Indians" and appealed through Commissioner Taylor for a "fair and thorough investigation."[9]

Over the next few weeks, Sherman mustered all of his considerable resources to meet the verbal assault. "We need not be disturbed," he wrote, "by the clamorous of the peace men who have succeeded in making little capital out of the punishment inflicted on the Cheyennes which they so richly merited and deserved."[10] He used the same arguments that he had to justify opening the campaign against the southern tribesmen, effectually stretching reality to show that Black Kettle's people had been the prime instigators of the violence the preceding summer, and that Custer's punishment of them was fully warranted. Although he averred that "Black Kettle himself did not wish to be at war," the chief had "lost all control over his young warriors," a position that, while to some degree true, failed to identify the prominent role of the Dog Soldiers and other bands' military society members in the depredations along the Saline and Solomon. There were also complaints that the troops in their attack had violated the reservation lands established for the Cheyennes and Arapahos. "This is a falsehood," responded Sheridan. "The reservation extends but 30 miles up the Washita from Fort Cobb. The battle took place 120 miles up the river. It is also alleged the band were friendly. No one could make such an assertion who had any regard for truth. The young men of this band [sic--Black Kettle's village]

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[9]Athearn, *Sherman and the Settlement of the West*, pp. 272-73; Sherman to AAG, December 12, 1868, in Sen. Ex. Doc. 18, p. 36; *New York Herald*, December 24, 1868. Wynkoop's resignation occurred on November 27, but was coincidental with, and not driven by news of, the Washita engagement. Wynkoop, *The Tall Chief*, p. 30.

[10]Sherman to Lieutenant Colonel Chauncey McKeever, January 16, 1869. NA, RG 393. Part I, Entry 2538. Vol. 1.

commenced the war." The Indian Ring, chimed the *Army and Navy Journal*, fortunately was small, and included in its membership only "a few place-holders, a few philanthropists, and a few plunderers. . . . Its nucleus is the Indian Bureau, its strength the horde of Indian agents, contractors, and peddlers. . . ."[11] And further, opined the *Journal* editor:

> We are told that Black Kettle's band was friendly, and, accordingly, that Custer is a second Chivington. That is not the fact. Black Kettle himself has not of late been engaged personally in the hostilities. . . . But his camp has been a rendezvous for young warriors, who start from it as a "base," and return to it with booty. We have the word of such officers as Sherman, Sheridan, Hazen, [and] Custer for these facts. If it be true, in the popular sense, that "the receiver is as bad as the thief," Black Kettle suffered a just fate."[12]

Even Colonel Hazen, at Fort Cobb, toed the company line and weighed in on the chief's war complicity. "In his talk with me, . . . Black Kettle stated that many of his men were then on the war path, and that their people did not want peace with the [white] people above the Arkansas."[13]

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[11]For the above quotes, see, Sherman to AAG, December 12, 1968. NA, RG 393, Part I. Entry 2538, Vol. 1; Sheridan to AAG, Division of the Missouri, January 1, 1869, in *Army and Navy Journal*, January 23, 1869 (and in Sen. Ex. Doc. 18, p. 59); and *Army and Navy Journal*, January 2, 1869. Sheridan's remarks were technically correct, although in his statement he was referencing the Kiowa and Comanche reserve as specified in the Medicine Lodge accord. In fact, however, the army expedition from Fort Dodge to Camp Supply and south to the Washita River had not penetrated the Cheyenne-Arapaho reservation lands as specified at Medicine Lodge, although it could be said to have invaded the hunting lands below the Arkansas. The route of the Kansas troops in reaching Camp Supply, however, did cross part of the reserve.

[12]*Army and Navy Journal*, January 2, 1869.

[13]Hazen to Sherman, December 31, 1868. Sheridan Papers, Microfilm Reel 76, Library of Congress.

Despite the army's policy of blaming all of the Cheyennes for the offenses of some, there was an outpouring of sympathy for Black Kettle, personally, owing to his past friendship and the tribulations that he, as a peace chief, had weathered, first because of Sand Creek and now because of Washita. Many people, civilian and military, had for years recognized such commitment in him, and strongly mourned his passing. Thomas Murphy, of the Central Indian Superintendency, called him as "one of the best and truest friends the whites have ever had among the Indians of the plains." Of the chief, Murphy wrote Taylor:

> When he ascertained that some of the young men of his tribe [village] had committed the atrocities upon the Solomon and Saline in August last, . . . so great was his grief he tore his hair and his clothes, and naturally supposing that the whites would wreak their vengeance upon all Indians that might chance to fall in their way, . . . he went south to avoid the impending trouble.

Murphy believed that the conflict with the Indians could have been avoided had prescribed treaty appropriations been forthcoming.[14] Even retired Brigadier General William S. Harney described the fallen chief as "as good a friend of the United States as I am." And Albert G. Boone, Indian Agent for the Upper Arkansas Agency, lamented that Black Kettle "was a good man; he was my friend; he was murdered."[15] The debate over the attack continued for months, with the western white population endorsing the military activity, but calling on the army to do more. Reflecting a common imperative for conquest, the position was expressed in the statement of one

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[14]Murphy to Taylor, December 4, 1868. Sen. Ex. Doc. No. 13, pp. 36-38.

[15]*New York Tribune*, February 17, 1877. Cited in Charles H. Whipple to Thoburn, November 5, 1912. Thoburn Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society. Item 86.01.1038:A.

frontiersman that "if this war should be abated one jot, in recognizing less rights than we claimed in the beginning it will have to be fought over again, or we must relinquish to the Indian the Pacific Railroads, all the gold mines of the mountains, the towns and settlements, the farms of the Plains, with all their improvements, and the white man forever quit the country. . . ."[16]

Following the destruction of Black Kettle's village and the withdrawal of the soldiers, the people who had escaped returned to the site with the downriver villagers to bury relatives and friends and to retrieve whatever could be salvaged. The Cheyenne, Magpie, stated that the day after the attack he and several women pulled Black Kettle's body from the Washita and carried it to a sandy knoll where the women debated over the place to inter the remains. Another Cheyenne later claimed that the chief's body was not recovered until several days had passed during which time wolves had partly devoured it; the remains were placed in the fork of a tree.[17] Following the visit to the destroyed village, the Cheyennes started southwest into the Texas panhandle. The Arapahos accompanied them. So did the Kiowas who had been on the Washita, along with some of the Comanches. On the Sweetwater, Chief Medicine Arrows (Stone Forehead) convened a council with the Arapaho, Kiowa, and Comanche leaders over what to do next. Relatives of the Washita captives had urged the chiefs not to strike back in revenge raids for fear that their people would be harmed by the soldiers. The chiefs agreed, however, that they

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[16]Post-Washita letter to the *St. Louis* (Missouri) *Republican*, undated, quoted in the *Army and Navy Journal*, January 30, 1869. See Athearn, *Sherman and the Settlement of the West*, pp. 276-77.

[17]Brill, citing Magpie, in *Conquest of the Southern Plains*, p. 25. In 1934, a skeleton found at the western end of the village area near the spot Magpie had last seen Black Kettle's body bore personal ornaments consistent with those worn by the chief. Ibid., pp. 25-26; Edger and Hoffman, "Some Reminiscences," p. 140n.

would fight the soldiers and their Indian allies from the north. They wished peace with the troops at Fort Cobb, and they sought the aid of the tribes at that agency to help subsist the Sweetwater bands with food and supplies from the government issues there. Most of the Kiowas and Comanches subsequently moved back to the Washita camps above Fort Cobb.[18]

Much official interest focused on the disposition of the "auxiliary tribes"--the Kiowas, Comanches, and Kiowa-Apaches--in the wake of the Washita engagement. The Arapahos were already guilty by association through their longstanding historical relationship with the Cheyennes; it was more or less understood that they would receive the same treatment as their close friends under the War Department's policy of holding all the people accountable for the sins of the few. But the status of the other tribes had not been as clear. Those tribes had professed their friendship for the government during frequent visits for rations at Fort Cobb. But now word circulated that those people not only had a presence in the fighting, but had aided and abetted Black Kettle's Cheyennes throughout their ordeal. Reportedly, when the stricken villagers moved south after Custer's attack, some of the Kiowas of Satanta and Satank traveled with them, and bands of Comanches had camped near them on the north fork of the Red River below the Antelope Hills. These developments suggested that some elements of the tribes were coalescing into a united front to face down any military forces that might come after them. So-called friendly elements of the Kiowas, Comanches, and Kiowa-Apaches maintained their camps on the Washita and gravitated down the stream in the direction of Fort Cobb. By December 2, five days after the Washita engagement, there were reported in camp at the mouth of Sweetwater Creek on the north fork of Red River, 150 lodges of Cheyennes, 180 of Arapahos, 80 of Kiowas,

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[18]Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, II, 694-95.

and 75 of Comanches--approximately 485 lodges in all. These now constituted the coalition that concerned the military authorities.[19]

News of the Washita attack dominated events around Fort Cobb in the days following, and the Indians already camped near that place, anticipating an army attack upon them, moved closer to the agency. "This fight has decidedly stirred up the Indians who were encamped along the Washita between this point and the scene of battle," reported Captain Alvord at Cobb. One of the earliest Indian accounts of the action alluded to what was probably the killing of Major Elliott and his men. Alvord presented the particulars, as derived from his scouts sent up the Washita:

> When the Cheyenne camp was surprised at dawn, a few of the fleetest runners escaped and endeavored to gain the other camps. These were followed by a squad of eighteen soldiers mounted upon gray horses, and as an Indian lagged in the race, he was overtaken and killed. Finally, a few of the leading young Indians reached another camp, and the 18 soldiers following were then surrounded and all killed--their horses being captured. There were one or two officers in this party. The warriors of the Cheyennes & Arrapahoes then gathering, returned to the village of Black Kettle, which they found destroyed, all the men killed, and the troops engaged in shooting a large number of ponies which they had collected in

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[19]"Summary of information regarding hostile Indians. Report of Captain H.E. Alvord," December 7, 1868. Sheridan Papers, Library of Congress, Microfilm roll 76. Also in "Summary of information regarding hostile Indians. Semi-weekly Report No. 5," December 7, 1868. Military Division of the Missouri Papers. Reports of Officers in the West and Southwest, 1874-75. U.S. Army Military History Institute, Army War College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania. See also, Hazen to Sherman, December 7, 1868 (especially sketch map showing locations of tribes). Sheridan Papers, Library of Congress, Microfilm roll 76.

> the neighborhood. Then and there, the main battle began, and lasted all day Friday, both parties holding their ground at night. . . . Saturday morning the troops commenced falling back, Indians following and attacking the rear and flanks, till at 10 o'clock the former reached their wagons on the Canadian, when the fighting ceased. . . . [20]

Alvord reported that but one band of Kiowas--guests of the Arapahos--had witnessed part of the engagement and had participated in killing a shaved headed Osage scout (although according to the records no Osages were killed). But a few Comanches were "neutral spectators"; one was killed by a long shot as he looked on, and his loss caused bitterness among his people.[21]

Considerations about the attitude of the Kiowas and Comanches in relation to that of the Cheyennes and Arapahos were paramount as Sheridan prepared his force for a second venture south. The Cheyennes mourned not only the loss of so many of their people killed in Custer's attack, but also that of the prisoners who were led away from the Washita. The fifty-three women and children, initially terrorized at their situation, fully expected to be executed by the soldiers and each morning intoned their mournful songs. Despite the fact that some bore serious

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[20]"Summary of information regarding hostile Indians. Semi-weekly Report No. 4," December 3, 1868. Military Division of the Missouri Papers. Reports of Officers in the West and Southwest, 1874-75. U.S. Army Military History Institute. A similar account is in Philip McCusky to Murphy, December 3, 1868, in Sen. Ex. Doc. 18, p. 30. The first notice of the Washita encounter had reached Captain Alvord at Fort Cobb on November 30. "Summary of information regarding hostile Indians. Semi-weekly Report No. 3," November 30, 1868. Military Division of the Missouri Papers. Reports of Officers in the West and Southwest, 1874-75. U.S. Army Military History Institute.

[21]"Summary of information regarding hostile Indians. Semi-weekly Report No. 4," December 3, 1868. Military Division of the Missouri Papers. Reports of Officers in the West and Southwest, 1874-75. U.S. Army Military History Institute.

injuries, all eschewed the wagons and ambulances and rode their ponies into Camp Supply. Fearing the worst was about to happen to them, several of the women broached the matter to an interpreter who quickly set their minds at ease. The prisoners received treatment for their wounds at the hospital before most of them were escorted in late December to a log stockade at Fort Hays. Three of the captives--Mahwissa, sister of Black Kettle; Monahseetah, or Meotzi, daughter of Little Rock, and an unidentified Sioux woman--returned south with Sheridan and Custer as potential intermediaries with the Cheyennes on the second leg of the campaign.[22]

The renewed offensive against the tribes got underway on Thursday, December 7, a cold but sunny day. "We started on another raid, south in the same direction as before," wrote Private Harvey. "I do not know where we will fetch up at."[23] The immediate objective was, in fact, Fort

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[22]*New York Herald*, December 24 and 26, 1868; NA, RG 393. Fort Dodge Letters Sent. NA Microfilm Publication M989; Blaine Burkey, *Custer, Come at Once! The Fort Hays Years of George and Elizabeth Custer, 1867-1870* (Hays, Kansas: Society of Friends of Historic Fort Hays, 1976), p. 64. Subsequent histories of the 1868 campaign, together with biographies of Custer, have weighed the notion that Custer and some other officers of the Seventh Cavalry took sexual liberties with the women prisoners, and that Custer maintained a relatively long-term liaison with Little Rock's daughter, Monahseetah. There appears to be credible evidence, both in Cheyenne oral history and in the written reminiscences of witnesses--both rendered altogether exclusive of knowledge of the other--that would thereby tend to validate the assertions. Ben Clark told Walter Camp "that many of the squaws captured at Washita were used by the officers. . . . Romero was put in charge of them and on the march Romero would send squaws around to the officers' tents every night. [Clark] says Custer picked out a fine looking one and had her in his tent every night. . . ." Foley, "Walter Camp & Ben Clark," p. 24. See also, Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, II, 696, 1327-28n10. Some secondary writers, however, have since elaborated on the basic information without providing supporting evidence for their claims. The most thorough discussion of the prisoners in confinement, as well as of the controversy regarding the women and its borderline fictional aspects, is in Burkey, *Custer Come at Once*, pp. 64-73. Apparently, for a while it was believed by some Cheyennes that Black Kettle's wife had survived and was imprisoned at Fort Hays, because in January, 1869, George Bent wrote President Grant direct requesting her release. Sherman to Townsend, January 28, 1869. NA, RG 393, Part I. Entry 2538, Vol. 1.

[23]Harvey, "A Farrier's Diary," p. 88.

Cobb. Sheridan, with his staff, would accompany and direct much of this campaign, although Custer was in nominal command. As a follow-up to the Washita, Sheridan intended to attack any tribesmen he met en route, and then at Fort Cobb make demands of any "Ring leaders" present there.[24] Equipped with sufficient forage and rations (thirty days' worth) brought down from Fort Dodge, and his animals in satisfactory condition enough to begin anew, Custer moved out at 10 a.m., despite a snow storm the previous night that laid down eight inches of drifting white cover. The command, totaling nearly 1700 men, consisted of eleven companies of the Seventh Cavalry, one of the Tenth, and ten of the Nineteenth Kansas Volunteer Infantry under Colonel Crawford, besides thirty or so white, Osage, and Kaw Indian scouts.[25] Three companies of the Third Infantry, one of the Fifth, and one of the Thirty-eighth, stayed behind to garrison and continue building Camp Supply under the command of Captain Page of the Third. Three hundred six-mule wagons loaded with provisions went along, guarded, front and rear, by the cavalry and infantry, respectively. The command traveled about a dozen miles, crossed Wolf Creek, and bivouacked on the plain along the south bank. Already many of the wagon teams played out, and more were hurriedly forwarded from Camp Supply to take their place.

At six a.m. of the 8th, the command was again in motion south, its wagons arrayed in four columns guarded on either flank by the horse and foot troops and in van and rear by

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[24]Sheridan to Sherman, December 7, 1868. Sheridan Papers, Microfilm Roll 13. In another missive of the same date, Sheridan wrote Sherman that "I judge from your instructions to me, that it is not intended to make peace and feed these Indians, without holding them responsible for the murders and thefts they have committed." Sheridan Papers, Microfilm Roll 76.

[25]Particulars of the role of the Nineteenth Kansas Infantry in the campaign are summarized in White, "Winter Campaigning with Sheridan and Custer," pp. 101-13. See also, Hadley, "The Nineteenth Kansas Cavalry," pp. 443-58.

mounted squadrons. Far in front rode flankers whose purpose was to reconnoiter for Indians. During the march, the convoy passed through lands dominated on one hand by assorted gravelly hummocks and on the other by thickets of dwarfed oak trees. After passing thirty miles, the troops camped along Hackberry Creek amid increasing evidence of the presence of Indians in the area. On the third day out, a terrific "norther" enveloped the soldiers and substantially impeded the wagons' advance. That night, with temperatures hovering near eighteen degrees below zero, they settled in along the Canadian River at a place with bad water and little timber. "The camp on the Canadian," wrote Keim, "will long be remembered by all who participated in the campaign of 1868-69."

> The wintry blast swept mercilessly through the valley, demolishing tents and extinguishing the few fires built against the intense cold. The night was intolerably dark. The troopers unable to keep warm, could be heard through the long hours tramping up and down, within the limits of the camp, afraid to lie down for fear of freezing to death. The animals without covering or protection from the wind suffered intensely. All night shivering at the picket-rope the poor brutes uttered melancholy moans, but it was beyond the power of man to alleviate their sufferings. At headquarters it was no better. Fires were out, tents were either down or flapping in the wind.[26]

The following day went much the same. The troops forded the river under temperatures of zero degrees, and the wind continued its barrage unabated. The crossing was difficult and took five hours, with many animals falling and becoming otherwise hurt in the icy bottom. Back up on the

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[26]*Sheridan's Troopers*, p. 137.

plain, the column proceeded slowly downstream to the east until late in the day as the Antelope Hills loomed ahead. Finally, at 4 p.m. December 10, the men made camp along the north side of the Washita River, a scant five or so miles above the ashed rubble of Black Kettle's destroyed village. Sheridan, desirous of seeing the field of the encounter, directed that the column lay over the next day, while a party proceeded to the village site to look for the remains of Elliott and his men.

The next morning the group, consisting of Sheridan and Custer, several staff and other officers, and the newspaper correspondent Keim, started away, accompanied by an escort composed of detachments of each of the Seventh's companies under CaptainYates and Lieutenants Custer and John F. Weston.[27] Their advance was preceded by several of the Indian scouts. The party traced the north side of the Washita. After one and one-half hours, they approached the river from the northeast, along the route Elliott had readied his battalion for the initial charge. Then they crossed the stream. Custer described the scene:

> The bodies of nearly all the warriors killed in the fight had been concealed or removed, while those of the squaws and children who had been slain in the excitement and confusion of the first charge, as well as in self-defence, were wrapped in blankets and bound with lariats, preparatory to removal and burial. Many of the Indian dogs were still found in the vicinity lately occupied by the

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[27]The officers who composed the party were Sheridan, Custer, Major James W. Forsyth, Captain J. Schuyler Crosby, Captain Andrew J. McGonnigle, Captain Samuel Robbins (promoted vice Hamilton on November 27, 1868), Captain George W. Yates, First Lieutenant William W. Cooke, Assistant Surgeon Morris J. Asch, First Lieutenant Charles Brewster, First Lieutenant Owen Hale, First Lieutenant Myles Moylan, First Lieutenant Thomas W. Custer, and Second Lieutenant John F. Weston. *New York Herald*, January 4, 1869.

> lodges of their owners; they probably subsisting on the bodies of the ponies that had been killed and then covered several acres of ground near by. As 10 days had elapsed since the battle, and scores of Indian bodies still remained unburied or unconcealed, some idea may be had of the precipitate haste with which the Indians had abandoned that section of the country.[28]

Entering the desolate ruins of the village, the group rousted thousands of noisy ravens and crows that took flight or scattered at the approach. Wolves watched from a distance, pondering the movements of the soldiers. "We found the evidences of the late engagement much as we had left them," recalled Custer. On examining the site, the party found the blanket-wrapped remains of a warrior; then others appeared, finally numbering thirty bodies, many of which had been similarly wrapped. "Some were laid in the branches of trees," said Keim, ". . . while others were deposited under protections made of bushes. . . ."[29] Custer observed that the large number of corpses proved "that the enemy's loss in killed warriors far exceeded the number (103) first reported by me."[30] At the village site, they saw the charred remnants of the Cheyennes' homes. Nearby, stated an officer of the Nineteenth Kansas, "were the carcasses of between four and five hundred poneys [sic] captured from the Indian and killed by Custer's order."[31] Sheridan and an

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[28]Custer to AAAG, Department of the Missouri, December 22, 1868. Sen. Ex. Doc. No. 40, p. 3.

[29]*Sheridan's Troopers*, pp. 143-44.

[30]Custer to AAAG, Department of the Missouri, December 22, 1868. Sen. Ex. Doc. No. 40, p. 3.

[31]George B. Jenness, "History of the 19th Kansas Cavalry" (undated manuscript in the Manuscripts Division, Kansas State Historical Society).

escort mounted a ridge from which they obtained an overview of the field; a short distance from the village and covering several acres lay the remains of the ponies shot by the Seventh cavalrymen. From the ridge, Custer explained how the engagement had unfolded. Then he and Sheridan, in company with Lieutenant Owen Hale and a small body of soldiers, rode downstream along the south side of the river, approximating Elliott's route away from the village. They were shortly followed by the remaining members of the party.

Proceeding down the river, the men ascended another rise to view the country, then started downstream again. Some 100 yards away, they encountered the body of a white man, "perfectly naked, and covered with arrow and bullet holes." It was one of Elliott's men, likely Sergeant Major Walter Kennedy. The party marked the location of the body, then continued east, passing over a small ravine, possibly the trace of modern Sergeant Major Creek. Soon more objects appeared in the grass about two hundred yards beyond the ravine, encouraging the riders to hurry forward. There, within a space of fifteen yards, lay the naked bodies of sixteen men, all, wrote Keim, "frozen as solidly as stone." The bodies of several cavalry mounts lay nearby. Many cartridge shells littered the ground around the corpses, evidence of the hard fighting that had occurred there. All of the soldiers had been mutilated in accordance with tribal customs.[32] They

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[32]Mutilation of dead enemies was common among the Cheyennes and other Plains tribes, its purpose to wreak ultimate revenge, assuring that the dead entered the next world thusly incapacitated. It was often practiced in the aftermath of combat by women and children. Scalping commonly occurred incidentally, and was not significantly a part of the Cheyennes' war honors tradition as was the practice of counting coup, or touching an enemy; most scalps taken by warriors and others were regarded merely as souvenirs. On the matter of mutilation and scalping among Plains societies, see, Moore, *The Cheyenne*, pp. 124-25; Anthony McGinnis, *Counting Coup and Cutting Horses: Intertribal Warfare on the Northern Great Plains, 1738-1889* (Evergreen, Colo.: Cordillera Press, Inc., 1990), pp. 28-29; and George B. Grinnell, "Coup and Scalp among the Plains Indians," in Roger C. Owen, James J.F. Deetz, and Anthony D. Fisher (eds.), *The North American Indians: A Sourcebook* (New York: The Macmillan Company,

lay face down.

Custer studied the scene and concluded that the following had happened to Major Elliott and his men:

> At a short distance, here and there, from the spot where the bodies lay, could be seen the carcasses of some of the horses of the party, which had been, probably, killed early in the fight. Seeing the hopelessness of breaking through the lines which surrounded them, and which undoubtedly numbered more than one hundred (100) to one (1), Elliott dismounted his men, tied their horses together, and prepared to sell their lives as dearly as possible. It may not be improper to add that in describing, as far as possible, the details of Elliott's fight, I rely not only upon a critical and personal examination of the ground and attendant circumstances, but am sustained by the statements of Indian chiefs and warriors who witnessed and participated in the fight. . . .[33]

Near the corpses of Elliott and his men were found several of Indians presumed killed by the soldiers. Having determined the fate of Custer's missing component, Sheridan and his party started back to camp, and soon after passed through some of the hastily abandoned villages of the downstream Arapahos, Cheyennes, and other tribes. They were littered with kettles, pots, rifles,

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1967), p. 520ff.

[33]Custer to AAAG, Department of the Missouri, December 22, 1868. Sen. Ex. Doc. No. 40, p. 4. Custer likely was alluding to a statement of Black Eagle of the Kiowas, one of the earliest Indian recollections of the Washita, which was sent from Fort Cobb within six days of the encounter. Philip McCusker to Murphy, December 3, 1868. Hazen transmitted a copy to the army hierarchy, noting that it represented "a sample of fifty (50) or more accounts all current in camp, and all coming from Indian sources."

untanned robes, lodge poles, and hundreds of other items, and Sheridan issued orders to destroy it all. Soon fires consumed the abandoned dunnage, and smoke could be seen rising along several miles of the Washita. As a detachment of soldiers scoured the ground near an abandoned Indian encampment downstream, the men came upon the remains of a white woman and child. The bodies were taken to the army camp and examined. That of the woman bore two bullet holes in the back of the head, which had besides been scalped and crushed, seemingly by a hatchet. That of the child, a boy, bore only a bruise on the face, the possible result of having been flung against a tree. They were subsequently identified as Mrs. Clara Blinn and her two-year-old child, Willie, who had been taken from a wagon train on the Arkansas River near Fort Lyon the preceding October reportedly by Kiowas under Satanta. Through the intervention of a trader named William ("Dutch Bill") Griffenstein and an intermediary, Mrs. Blinn had managed to get word of her and her son's plight to Fort Cobb in a poignant, desperate letter written November 7, in which she stated that they were with the Cheyennes and expressed her fear of being traded by the Indians into slavery in Mexico. "For our sakes, do all you can [for us] and god will bless you," she concluded.[34] Mrs. Blinn's body, reported Keim, "was dressed in the ordinary garments of a white woman; on the feet were a pair of leather gaiters, comparatively new. Upon the breast was found a piece of corn-cake, and the position of the hands indicated that woman was eating when she, unexpectedly, received the fatal blow."[35] The remains of Mrs. Blinn and her son,

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[34]*New York Herald*, December 24, 1868. A thorough account of the Blinn episode, which includes the complete text of Mrs. Blinn's letter, is in Judith P. Justus, "The Saga of Clara H. Blinn at the Battle of the Washita," *Research Review: The Journal of the Little Big Horn Associates*, 14 (Winter, 2000), pp. 11-20, 31.

[35]*Sheridan's Troopers*, p. 150.

together with those of Major Elliott, were transported to the main camp to be conveyed ultimately to Fort Arbuckle for burial.[36] Wagons were promptly dispatched under Lieutenant Hale to retrieve the other dead and return them to camp; they arrived back at 9 p.m. A trench had meantime been dug "on the crest of a beautiful knoll, overlooking the valley of the Washita," and there, by torchlight, Elliott's men were interred. "Several men from each of the companies, to which the deceased soldiers belonged, were present to identify the remains." Dr. Lippincott examined the remains and detailed his findings as follows:

> Major Joel H. Elliott--two bullet holes in head; one in left cheek; right hand cut off; left foot almost cut off; * * * deep gash in right groin; deep gashes in calves of both legs; little finger of left hand cut off, and throat cut.
>
> Sergeant-major Walter Kennedy--bullet hole in right temple; head partly cut off; seventeen bullet holes in back, and two in legs.
>
> Corporal Harry Mercer, troop E--bullet hole in right axilla; one in region of heart; three in back; eight arrow wounds in back; right ear cut off; head scalped and skull fractured; deep gashes in both legs, and throat cut.

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[36]Elliott's mother requested that her son's body be returned for burial in Centreville, Indiana. AAG, Division of the Missouri, to Sheridan, December 5, 1868, containing request for shipment of remains; Sherman to Mary Elliott, December 5, 1868, and Sherman to Sheridan, December 5, 1868. NA, RG 393. Part I, Entry 2538. Vol. 1. Sherman shortly wrote Elliott's mother that "it may be some time before I hear of the remains of Major Elliott being started. You shall have earliest notice." Sherman to Mary Elliott, December 12, 1868. NA, RG 393. Part I, Entry 2538. Vol. 1. Elliott meantime was buried temporarily at Fort Cobb. AAG, Division of the Missouri to Mary Elliott, January 11, 1869. NA, RG 393. Part I, Entry 2538. Vol. 1. Apparently, the Blinns were likewise buried there temporarily. Jenness, "History of the 19th Kansas Cavalry." When Fort Cobb closed, Elliott's body was removed to Fort Arbuckle, presumably along with those of the Blinns, who were also buried there. Following the abandonment of Fort Arbuckle in 1870, all three bodies were disinterred and reburied at Fort Gibson, where they lie today in Fort Gibson National Cemetery.

Corporal Thomas Christie, troop E--bullet hole in head; right foot cut off; bullet hole in abdomen, and throat cut.

Corporal William Carrick, troop H--bullet hole in right parietal bone; both feet cut off; throat cut; left arm broken.

Private Eugene Clover, troop H--head cut off; arrow wound in right side; both legs terribly mutilated.

Private William Milligan [Mulligan?], troop H--bullet hole in left side of head; deep gashes in right leg; * * left arm deeply gashed; head scalped, and throat cut.

Corporal James F. Williams, troop I--bullet hole in back; head and both arms cut off; many and deep gashes in back.

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Private Thomas Dooney, troop I--arrow hole in region of stomach; thorax cut open; head cut off, and right shoulder cut by a tomahawk.

Farrier Thomas Fitzpatrick, troop M--scalped; two arrow and several bullet holes in back; throat cut.

Private Ferdinand Lineback, troop M--bullet hole in left parietal bone; head scalped and arm broken; * * throat cut.

Private John Meyers [Myers], troop M--several bullet holes in head; scalped; skull extensively fractured; several arrow and bullet holes in back; deep gashes in face; throat cut.

Private Carsten [Carson] D.J. Meyers [Myers], troop M--several bullet

holes in head; scalped; 19 bullet holes in body; * * throat cut.

Private Cal. Sharpe, troop M--two bullet holes in right side; throat cut; one bullet hole in left side of head; one arrow hole in left side; * * left arm broken.

Unknown--head cut off; body partially destroyed by wolves.

Unknown--head and right hand cut off; three bullet and nine arrow holes in back.

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Unknown--scalped; skull fractured; 6 bullet and 13 arrow holes in back; three bullet holes in chest.[37]

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[37]Custer to AAAG, Department of the Missouri, December 22, 1868. Sen. Ex. Doc. No. 40, pp. 4-5. Also reproduced in Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, pp. 288-89. The three unknowns listed above, together with one other man not accounted for in Custer's list, were: Private John George, Company H; Private John McClernan, Company E; Sergeant Erwin Vanousky, Company M; and Private Frederick Stobascus, Company M. See Appendix A. Obviously, certain particularly offensive material was excised from the descriptions of the mutilations. In a special report on the condition of Elliott's body, Dr. Lippincott described it as follows: "Two bullet holes in head, one in left cheek, right hand cut off, left hand almost cut off, penis cut off, deep gash in right groin, deep gash in calves of both legs, little finger of left hand cut off, and throat cut." (Note the significant differences in this description from that published above.) Medical Records, Fort Cobb, File D, Box 4. NA, RG 94. Major Jenness also stated that Elliott's right hand had been severed. "History of the 19th Kansas Cavalry." Captain Benteen wrote a friend that "nearly all had been horribly mangled in a way delicacy forbids me to mention," a statement that strongly suggests that most of the soldiers' genitalia had been cut off or otherwise defiled. *Missouri Democrat*, February 9, 1869. Years later, Ben Clark stated the following about the bodies: "Every body except Elliott's had been mutilated. Skulls were crushed in with war clubs, ears and noses and legs had been cut off, scalps torn away and the bodies pierced with bullets and arrows. Elliott had been greatly admired by the Indians for his bravery long before the fight. They remembered this when he was dead and treated him as a valorous foe by severing his right hand at the wrist and his left foot at the ankle, leaving each attached by a tendon. The body bore no other marks save the death wounds." *New York Sun*, May 14, 1899. Similarly, Major George B. Jenness of the Kansas troops remarked that "all [the bodies] but that of Elliott [had been] horribly mutilated." "History of the 19th Kansas Cavalry." On this point, see also the

By midnight, the dead, wrapped in blankets, had been placed in the trench and covered over. There was no service.[38]

On December 12, five days after leaving Camp Supply, Sheridan's column proceeded down the Washita, passing over the ground of the hastily abandoned camps on the Indian trail toward Fort Cobb. Scouts with the command decreed that the Cheyennes and Arapahos had gone off toward the southwest. Progess was slow, the debilitated animals failing rapidly with "horses and mules killed every day as they are too poor and weak to travel."[39] Over the next several days, the troops fought blizzards, deep snows, and sub-zero temperatures as they made their way southeast, and pioneer units worked constantly to clear the way for the wagons. "Creek banks had to be dug down to make crossings for the wagon trains," remembered one veteran.[40] On Friday, December 15th, warriors appeared in the distance. "We saw twenty Indians today but could not catch them," observed Harvey. "They ran very fast and got away."[41] More appeared the following day, and on the 17th, word arrived from Colonel Hazen, announcing to Sheridan and Custer that all the Indians in the vicinity of his agency were friendly. Soon after, a party of

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account of Private Thomas Shanley in *The Daily Oklahoman*, August 2, 1925.

[38]The precise location of the burial of Elliott's men has not been determined. Ben Clark recalled that the burials were made "just above or west of our camp," and that the army camp was on the north side of the Washita "where it bends the farthest north, some six miles or so below the Black Kettle camp." Clark to Barde, May 1, 1903. Barde Collection. Manuscript Division, Oklahoma Historical Society. The remains of the seventeen soldiers presumably lie there yet.

[39]Spotts, *Campaigning with Custer*, p. 76.

[40]W.R. Smith, formerly of Company F, Nineteenth Kansas Volunteer Cavalry, letter to *National Tribune*, March 26, 1925.

[41]"A Farrier's Diary," p. 89.

Kiowas, including the leaders, Satanta and Lone Wolf, asserting their peaceful disposition, approached the column and conferred with Custer and other officers. Enticed by the promise of rations at Fort Cobb, these people had removed themselves from the proximity of the Cheyennes and Arapahos and had ventured toward the agency. Sheridan believed that these Indians had been involved at the Washita, but because of Hazen's promise of protection to them felt constrained not to attack them. Too, Custer believed that the Kiowas and Comanches had admittedly participated in the Washita engagement by attacking his troops after the village had been captured.[42] Moreover, the bodies of Mrs. Blinn and her child had reportedly been found in the abandoned camp attributed to Satanta's Kiowas.[43] Now the Kiowas "were only deterred from

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[42]While the Kiowas played no immediate role in the Washita action affecting the village, it is possible that some of their warriors took part in the subsequent long-range dueling between the cavalrymen and the Indians from the downriver camps. As previously indicated, there exists substantial evidence that some Kiowas participated in the killing of Elliott's command. Hazen, however, presented records that showed that most of that tribe were camped within twenty miles of Fort Cobb on the night of November 26, and that some of the leaders, notably Satanta, Satank, Timber Mountain, and Lone Wolf, remained at the agency on the morning of November 27--the very time of the attack on Black Kettle's village and therefore could not have been involved in the fighting. However, Philip McCusker, an interpreter at Fort Cobb, recalled that about thirty lodges of Kiowas under Big Bow and To-hau-son that had never been to Fort Cobb, were indeed encamped near the Washita camps of the Cheyennes and Arapahos and participated in the fighting there. "Some Corrections to 'Life on the Plains,'" pp. 307, 314, 318.

[43]Colonel Hazen stated that the Blinns had been captured by Arapahos and had been killed by them, "the Kiowas never having been in any way responsible in this case." "I was on the point of rescuing her [Clara Blinn] and in correspondence with her, when the battle took place." "Some Corrections to 'Life on the Plains,'" p. 305. However, two of Captain Alvord's scouting reports, dated November 22 and 26, 1868, expressly state that the Blinns were held in one of the Cheyenne camps. On the first date, Alvord noted that "at the Cheyenne camp there is a white woman and her child, understood to have been captured on the Santa Fe road in September [sic] last." On the 26th, he wrote: "The white woman held as a captive at that [Cheyenne and Arapaho] camp is Clara Blinn--her son Willie, two years old, is with her." Military Division of the Missouri Papers. Reports of Officers in the West and Southwest, 1874-75. U.S. Army Military History Institute. And Clara Blinn herself stated in her letter of November 7th that "we are with the Cheyenne[s]." Justus, "Saga of Clara H. Blinn," p. 13.

hostile acts by discovering our strength to be far greater than they had imagined. . . ."[44] Thus wary of the Indians' overtures, Custer permitted the leaders and their people to accompany the troops to Fort Cobb. As more and more of the panicked Indians gradually drew away from the command, however, ostensibly to help their families come in, the officers suspected that the tribesmen were trying to flee. To forestall this, they arrested Lone Wolf and Satanta. Next day, when the Indians had still not appeared, Sheridan threatened to hang the chiefs, an alarm that brought most if not all of the people to assemble near Fort Cobb. The chiefs remained imprisoned for two months pending the surrender of the remaining Kiowas.[45]

Meanwhile, as Custer dealt first with the Cheyennes at the Washita and then went with Sheridan in pursuit of them and the other tribes in the weeks that followed, the remaining wings of Sheridan's grand strategy had also been activated. These columns were to contain the tribesmen while pressing them toward the Sheridan-Custer operating arena. The troops sent by Colonel Getty were the first afield, six companies of the Third Cavalry and four of the Thirty-seventh Infantry, augmented by four mountain howitzers, under command of Major Andrew W. Evans left Fort Bascom, New Mexico Territory, on November 18. Two weeks later, on December 2, Lieutenant Colonel Eugene A. Carr departed Fort Lyon, Colorado Territory, presently to command seven companies of the Fifth Cavalry, four of the Tenth, and one of the Seventh in his movement. The columns together totaled approximately 650 soldiers.

Despite their intent, the movements of Evans's and Carr's commands were of little

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[44]*My Life on the Plains*, p. 293.

[45]Sheridan to AAG, Division of the Missouri, December 24, 1868. Sheridan Papers, Library of Congress, Microfilm Roll 76.

overall consequence. On a snowy and blustery Christmas Day, more than a month after leaving Fort Bascom, Evans's cavalrymen discovered a village of Comanches at Soldier Spring, on the North Fork of Red River near the west end of the Wichita Mountains in present southwestern Oklahoma, unleased the howitzers, and quickly captured it. The Comanches, with Kiowa assistance, feebly countered the strike, but the soldiers succeeded in destroying the Indians' property and meat supply. The people fled, but Evans, his command plagued with fatigued animals, did not pursue. His casualties numbered but three men wounded, one mortally, while the tribesmen were estimated to have suffered as many as thirty casualties. Most of the Indians eventually came in to Fort Cobb or journeyed to Fort Bascom to surrender. Evans reprovisioned his troops near Fort Cobb and occupied a depot on the Canadian River 185 miles from Bascom until late January before returning to New Mexico. Carr's undertaking, meantime, was fraught with bad luck and worse weather from the beginning. A command under Captain William H. Penrose had departed Fort Lyon in November to established a base camp on the North Canadian. Penrose contended with terrible snowstorms. His horses and mules froze, and he was forced to destroy scores more in the course of his mission, which was additionally jeopardized by failing rations and forage. Major Carr ventured south into the Indian Territory to rendezvous with Penrose, but encountered the same severe conditions before the two joined forces at a base camp on Palo Duro Creek on December 21. Then the soldiers headed south, contacted Evans's depot--even crossing his line of march--, and continued probing the Canadian drainage before conditions dictated their return to Palo Duro Creek without success. Believing that the other components of Sheridan's offensive had concluded their involvement, Carr in mid-February directed his command back to Fort Lyon. Three men perished, two from exposure, during the

Carr-Penrose enterprise.[46]

Although Sheridan described Evans's assault on the Comanche village "the final blow to the backbone of the Indian rebellion," the statement rang with hyperbole.[47] All in all, the campaigning of Evans and Carr, while keeping the tribesmen to the south anxious and moving, had but a residual effect on events well underway with the Sheridan-Custer column. By the end of December, thousands of Indians of various tribes, both traditionally sedentary peoples as well as members of the groups targeted by the army, all fearing attack in the wake of the Washita encounter, had descended on the Fort Cobb agency, then garrisoned by only three companies of the Tenth Cavalry and one of the Sixth Infantry. "There is no fort here," remarked Spotts, "only a large warehouse and quarters for probably one or two companies."[48] So many people and their animals camping in the contracted area depleted the winter grass. Sheridan's own force added to the congestion, its wasted horses and fatigued soldiers enervated by the conditions around them.

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[46]Evans's expedition is delineated in *Army and Navy Journal*, March 13, 1869, and in Sheridan to AAG, Department of the Missouri, December 31, 1868, in *Army and Navy Journal*, January 30, 1869. Evans's lengthy and detailed report is in Evans to AAAG, Headquarters, District of New Mexico, January 23, 1869. Sheridan Papers, Library of Congress, Microfilm roll 76. For Carr's expedition, see Carr to Sheridan, December 20, 1868, January 18, 1869, and January 20, 1869, in Military Division of the Missouri Papers. Reports of Officers in the West and Southwest, 1874-75. Manuscripts Division, U.S. Army Military History Institute; Carr to AAG, Department of the Missouri, April 7, 1869. Sheridan Papers, Library of Congress, Microfilm roll 76, along with able syntheses in Leckie, *Military Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 114-19, and, especially, Morris F. Taylor, "The Carr-Penrose Expedition: General Sheridan's Winter Campaign, 1868-1869," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 51 (Summer, 1973), pp. 159-76. For the role of the Tenth Cavalry in the operations of 1868-69, see, William H. Leckie, *The Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of the Negro Cavalry in the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), pp. 26-44.

[47]Sheridan to AAG, Division of the Missouri, January 1, 1869, in *Army and Navy Journal*, January 23, 1869.

[48]*Campaigning with Custer*, p. 82.

Several hundred of the played out beasts were shot. Supplies for the command had to be hauled in overland from Fort Arbuckle, to the southeast. Further, heavy rains now deluged the region, turning the ground around Fort Cobb into a quagmire. The troops were miserable. Wrote Harvey: "I am afraid our camp will overflow before it stops raining. We are all wet and our blankets are damp."[49] In early January, 1869, Sheridan settled on a new site for the agency thirty miles south, near the eastern foot of the Wichita range where Medicine Bluff Creek entered Cache Creek, a location selected previously by Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson. Grierson's cavalrymen began building the six-company cavalry post, dubbed Camp Wichita. Sheridan later named it Fort Sill to honor Brigadier General Joshua W. Sill, a West Point classmate killed at Stone's River, Tennessee, during the Civil War.[50]

With the relocation of the Kiowas, most of the Comanches, and the other tribes at the new agency, Sheridan turned his attention to the Cheyennes and Arapahos, still smarting over the Washita encounter and secluded to the west, beyond the Wichita Mountains.[51] While still at Fort

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[49]"A Farrier's Diary," p. 91.

[50]For Camp Wichita and Fort Sill, see Frazer, *Forts of the West*, p. 124, and, especially, Nye, *Carbine & Lance*. By March, 1869, Camp Wichita, commanded by Grierson (who also commanded the District of the Indian Territory), was garrisoned by four companies of the Tenth Cavalry and two companies of the Sixth Infantry. "About 4,000 Indians are in the vicinity of the post, on the reservation. They are the following named bands: Three bands of Comanches--Pennetacos, 250 strong, chiefs Tosheway, Asahabit and Essatoyet; Noconees, 320 strong, chief Ta-ha-yer-qua-hip (Horse buck); Yamparicos, 360 strong, chiefs Ten Bear, Iron Mountain, Howear and Little Crow; Kiowas, about 790 strong, chiefs Satanta, Lone Wolf, Black Eagle and Kicking Eagle; [Kiowa-]Apaches, about 290 strong, chiefs Wolf Sleeve and Soomsetah; Arapahoes, about 370 strong, chiefs Little Raven, yellow Bear and Storm; Caddoes, about 450 strong, chiefs Warloopi and George Washington." *Army and Navy Journal*, April 24, 1869.

[51]At Fort Sill, Colonel Hazen would help inaugurate procedures that would come to represent President Grant's so-called "Peace Policy"--wherein members of various church denominations were invited to run the Indian agencies. When the Bureau of Indian Affairs

Cobb, Custer employed Black Kettle's sister, Mahwissa, and a Kiowa-Apache named Iron Shirt as emissaries to determine the whereabouts and condition of the Cheyennes. Although Mahwissa subsequently stayed with her people, through her efforts several of the chiefs, including Little Robe of the Cheyennes and Yellow Bear of the Arapahos agreed to council; they disclosed to Sheridan the impoverished condition of the people, many of whom now favored surrendering. Speaking bluntly, the general explained that if they did not come in and stay peacefully, his soldiers would "fight the thing out." The chiefs assented, but Sheridan warned them that none of the prisoners taken at the Washita would be returned until *all* of the Cheyennes and Arapahos came in. Sheridan also broached the subject of the two remaining white women held by the Indians. The general pointedly told Little Robe that the captives must be delivered.

Guided by Little Robe and Yellow Bear, in late January Custer moved out of Fort Sill with a body of forty cavalrymen mostly composed of Lieutenant Cooke's sharpshooters. They encircled the nearby Wichitas and convinced sixty lodges of Little Raven's Arapahos to move from Mulberry Creek, in the Texas panhandle, into Fort Sill, where stood the relocated camps of Kiowas, Comanches, and Kiowa-Apaches. Custer described Little Raven's people as being in pitiful condition, with both people and animals hungry and naked. The major objective, however, remained the transient Cheyennes, who had moved into the Texas panhandle and were reportedly migrating toward the Llano Estacado, or Staked Plains. By early February, the Cheyenne camps targeted by the army were estimated to number approximately 200 tipis with

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assumed control of the Fort Sill agency, the Quakers took over introducing the tribesmen to the tenets of severalty and husbandry. Richard Henry Pratt, *Battlefield and Classroom: Four Decades with the American Indian, 1867-1904*. Ed. by Robert M. Utley (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1964), p. 36, 36n14.

between 1000 and 1400 people traveling together.[52]

In early March, Custer set out with eleven companies of the Seventh Cavalry and ten of the Nineteenth Kansas guided by white and Osage scouts, his mission to find the Cheyennes and "administer to them such treatment as past conduct and existing circumstances demanded."[53] Many of the volunteer troops, dismounted because of their jaded animals and unaccustomed to their infantry status, nonetheless "made a pretty fair stagger at it," recollected a Kansas man. This movement was driven immediately by knowledge that the winter season was nearly ended, and by concern that with the greening of springtime and consequent strengthening of the Indians' ponies, the army's advantage over the tribes would be lost. Sheridan, subsequently promoted to divisional commander vice Sherman's promotion to general after Ulysses S. Grant's inauguration as president on March 4, shortly left the expedition and returned to Camp Supply and stations east. Colonel Crawford, too, resigned his commission in February, turning command of the Kansas troops over to his lieutenant colonel, Horace L. Moore. Thus provided, Custer moved southwest from Fort Sill, tracing the southern edge of the Wichita Mountains to reach the North Fork of the Red River. His command suffered severely, and here, on March 6, Custer sent 400 enfeebled regulars and volunteers, along with part of their wagon train, east to a supply depot on the Washita River, a mile below the field of the November 27th encounter. On March 10, these

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[52]Alvord to Grierson, February 5, 1869. Microfilm rolls I and II, Benjamin H. Grierson Papers, Newberry Library, Chicago. Transcribed excerpts in the library of Fort Davis National Historical Site; Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, II, 703-04; Spotts, *Campaigning with Custer*, p. 103.

[53]Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, p. 343. Custer claimed that "one of the objects of the expedition" was to find and secure the release of two white women alleged to have been taken by the Cheyennes and supposedly still in their custody. Ibid., p. 353. See below.

troops reached the depot to find Captain Inman's train from Camp Supply.[54]

Custer and 800 men of the Seventh and Kansas troops, their own condition bordering on desperate, kept moving west to the Salt Fork, then pursued a trail northeast to Gypsum Creek. On March 8, the command rousted a small camp of Cheyennes before continuing west and south. Three days later, the Osages found a slight trail and the column headed northeast in pursuit amid increasing signs of tribesmen nearby. "No bugle calls or discharges of fire arms were permitted," reported Custer. On the afternoon of March 15, beset by scant forage and rations and with his men living on butchered mule meat, the troops came upon a village of Cheyennes under Medicine Arrows along Sweetwater Creek.[55] Learning that the camp harbored the two captive white women, and fearful that an attack might bring on their deaths, Custer advanced with an escort to council with Medicine Arrows and other headmen who had indicated a desire to parley. "Never before or since," he explained, "have we seen so favorable an opportunity for

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[54]Custer to Sheridan, March 21, 1869. Military Division of the Missouri Papers. Reports of Officers in the West and Southwest, 1874-75. Manuscripts Division, U.S. Army Military History Institute (also in Sheridan Papers, Library of Congress, Microfilm roll 76); Spotts, *Campaigning with Custer*, pp. 140-41. In his memoir, *My Life on the Plains*, Custer does not mention the departure for the Washita field depot of a large part of his command. Private Harvey was one of those who accompanied Myers's column. On the day after his arrival at the Washita depot, he toured the encounter site, erroneously commenting that "the bones of our dead lay all over the ground; the wolves dug them up and ate all the flesh off of them." Obviously, he saw Indian remains, not army dead. In his entry of March 17, he corrected himself, reporting that "on our old battle ground, nothing to be seen but some old skull bones of dead Indians, killed in the fight." Harvey, "A Farrier's Diary," p. 101-02. See also, John Murphy, "Reminiscences of the Washita Campaign and of the Darlington Indian Agency," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, (need cite), p. 267; and "A.L. Runyon's Letters," pp. 72-74. David L. Spotts, who had been with the Kansas troops, stated that the depot stood one mile below the encounter site, thus presumably east from where Black Kettle's village had been located. Spotts to E.C. Searcy, January 20, 1933. E.C. Searcy Collection, Western History Collection, Box S-23, Folder 7. University of Oklahoma Library.

[55]Custer to Sheridan, March 21, 1869.

administering well-merited punishment to one of the strongest and most troublesome of the hostile tribes."[56] He learned, moreover, that other camps of Cheyennes stretched along the Sweetwater for miles, and together totaled some 260 lodges, many of them occupied by Dog Soldiers. While his command gradually deployed at either end of the camp, the colonel smoked a ceremonial pipe and explained his mission. At the conclusion of the meeting, the chief purportedly emptied ashes from the pipe bowl onto Custer's boots in a gesture insuring his future bad luck, a vignette that later found its way into Cheyenne folklore regarding the officer's relationship with the tribe.[57] The women were Mrs. Anna Belle Brewster Morgan and Miss Sarah Catherine White, the former a twenty-four-year-old farmer's bride taken from the Solomon settlements in September, and the latter an eighteen-year-old from the Republican River Valley,

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[56]*My Life on the Plains*, p. 354. Efforts to find the exact site of the camp in the 1930s are explained in Spotts to Searcy, January 20, 1933, and February 9, 1933. E.C. Searcy Collection; and in Spotts to Thoburn, February 16, 1933. Thoburn Collection, WA-2, Box 33, File 11, 86.01.

[57]The lodge in which the parley took place held the *Mahuts*, the four sacred arrows that with the sacred buffalo hat comprised the cornerstones of Cheyenne religion and society. According to Cheyenne oral history, the Indians purposefully seated Custer directly beneath the sacred arrows. Chief Medicine Arrows told Custer that "if you are acting treachery toward us, sometime you and your whole command will be killed." George Bent to George E. Hyde, September, 1905. Bent Papers, Colorado Historical Society, as cited in Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, p. 337. According to the Cheyennes, this incident forecasted the deaths of Custer and his immediate command at the Little Big Horn River in Montana Territory on June 25, 1876. George Bent described the event: Custer sat "right under the sacred arrows, which were hanging from a forked stick made for that purpose. Lighting his pipe, Rock Forehead [Medicine Arrows (Stone Forehead), keeper of the arrows] held it while Custer smoked, telling Custer at the same time, in Cheyenne, that if he was acting treacherously he and all his command would soon be killed. When Custer had smoked, Rock Forehead took the pipe stick and loosened the ashes, then poured them on Custer's toes to give him bad luck." *Life of George Bent*, p. 325. The most detailed account of the episode from the Cheyenne perspective is in Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, II, 708-11. See also, ibid., 1030, and Powell, *Sweet Medicine*, I, 120-23, for the sequel, and Liberty and Stands In Timber, *Cheyenne Memories*, pp. 82-83, for variant aspects.

where she had been captured in August, 1868. Miss White's father had been killed in the attack that preceded her capture.

Custer determined to secure the women's release. His decision to watch and wait elicited complaints from some of the Kansas troops who wanted to attack the village. During an assembly hosted by the Cheyennes later that day, seemingly contrived to distract the officers while the villagers, doubtless frightened in the wake of the Washita attack, abandoned their lodges and cleared out, Custer's men seized four Cheyennes, three of whom were Dog Soldiers. The offense caused instant commotion among the tribesmen and an immediate crisis loomed. One of the captured men was shortly sent forward bearing demands respecting the release of the women and the removal of the Cheyennes to Camp Supply. Next day, Little Robe and some followers appeared from a village downstream and consulted over the situation, but left only with Custer's ultimatum that the Indians release the women without condition. On the 17th, the command moved southeast toward the downstream camps. After continued uneasy negotiations, Custer, instituting the strategy imposed in dealing with the Kiowas, announced that the remaining hostages--Big Head, Dull Knife (also known as Lean Face), and Fat Bear--would be hanged at sunset March 19 if the captives had not appeared.[58] "I knew," recorded Custer, ". . . when the

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[58]Cheyennes from Little Robe's village who turned themselves in at Camp Wichita on April 9, 1869, reported that the hostages seized on the Sweetwater were Lean Man, Little Bear, and Big Head, all of which names are identical to, or can be construed closely from, those given above. Grierson to AAG, Department of the Missouri, April 10, 1869. Sheridan Papers, Library of Congress, Microfilm reel 76. The mixed blood, George Bent, who was not present, identified the three as Lean Face, Fat Bear, and Curly Hair. Northern Cheyenne tribal historian John Stands in Timber in 1960 identified an 1869 photo of the men as Little Bear, Hairless Bear, and Island. A niece of Island claimed that the picture was of Younger Bear, chief Comes in Sight, and Island. For Bent's account of the incident, as obtained from participants, see, *Life of George Bent*, p. 325-26.

question was forced upon them as to whether they preferred to deliver up the white girls to us or to force by their refusal the execution of the three chiefs, their decision would be in favor of their people."[59] This intimidation brought results; before the deadline, the Cheyennes handed over the women, emaciated and swathed in stitched-together flour sacks, leggings and moccasins. "I never saw such heart-broken, hopeless expressions on the face of another human being," remarked a white scout who was present.[60] Mrs. Morgan's brother, Daniel A. Brewster, had accompanied Custer from Fort Sill and was there to witness her release to the Kansas officers.[61] The troops moved back to their former camp near the site of Medicine Arrows's deserted village, which they then plundered. Custer retained the hostage chiefs and extracted assurances that the Cheyenne villages would go in to Camp Supply. Pressed for time by his failing animals and insufficient rations, Custer took the three hostages with him when he started to the Washita field depot, known as Camp Inman, on March 21.[62] His worn and hungry soldiers, many now afoot,

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[59]*My Life on the Plains*, p. 370.

[60]George W. Brown, "Reminiscences of a Scout," *Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine*, XI (December 1910), p. 56.

[61]Sarah White later became a school teacher and married a farmer, H.C. Brooks, with whom she had seven children. She died in 1939 in Concordia, Kansas. Her colleague in captivity, Mrs. Morgan, rejoined her husband, who had been wounded in the attack on their farm. They raised a family, but Mrs. Morgan eventually entered an asylum in Topeka, where she died in 1902. Spotts, *Campaigning with Custer*, pp. 207-15; *Kansas City Times*, May 31, 1939.

[62]Personal recollections of the incidents at Medicine Arrows's village are in Custer to Sheridan, March 21, 1869; Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, pp. 353-76; Custer, *Following the Guidon*, pp. 56-57; Spotts, *Campaigning with Custer*, pp. 153-60; Ryan, *Ten Years*, pp. 70-73; "Narrative of Josephus Bingaman"; Moore, "Nineteenth Kansas Cavalry in the Washita Campaign," pp. 361-64 (which closely details the release of the women); and George W. Brown, "Life and Adventures of George W. Brown." Ed. by William E. Connelley. *Collections of the Kansas State Historical Society*, 17 (1928), 107-09. An able synthesis of Indian and nonIndian accounts appears in Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, II, 707-18, but see also the

barely made it back to the depot, passing by "the bones of the ponies killed at the destruction of Black Kettle's camp" to arrive there during the night of the 23rd.[63] "We have penetrated every haunt frequented by the five tribes which were lately hostile," Custer penned Sheridan. "We now know their accustomed routes and hiding places. We have taught the Indians that they are safe from us at no place and at no season, and . . . that the white man can endure the inclemencies of winter better than the Indian."[64]

With Captain Inman's train accompanying, the soldiers reached Camp Supply on March 28. The troops passed through Fort Dodge four days later, and gained Fort Hays on April 7. Eleven days later, the Kansas volunteers, now discharged entrained east for their homes. By early April, most of the Arapahos and some of the Cheyennes had come in to Fort Sill. The Dog Soldiers refused to yield, however, and moved north to the Republican River country where in July, 1869, they were mostly wiped out in battle with Colonel Carr's Fifth cavalrymen at Summit Springs, Colorado Territory. By that time, the Washita prisoners had been returned to their people. Little Robe, Eagle's Head, Medicine Arrows, and Buffalo Head and their followers had all come into Camp Supply, and remaining bands continued to straggle in over ensuing months.

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comprehensive presentations in David Dixon, "Custer and the Sweetwater Hostages," *Custer and His Times, Book Three, A Publication of the Little Big Horn Associates, Inc.* (1987), pp. 82-108, and Lonnie J. White, "White Women Captives of the Southern Cheyennes," pp. 335-42. The three chiefs were initially incarcerated in the Fort Hays stockade with the Washita prisoners. When the commanding officer attempted to transfer them to the guardhouse without interpreting to them a reason, the Indians believed that they were to be executed. They rushed the guards with knives, and two--Fat Bear and Dull Knife--died in the affray. Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, p. 338.

[63]Spotts to Thoburn, February 13, 16, and 18, and March 6, 1933. Thoburn Collection, WA-2, Box 33, File 11, 86.01.

[64]Custer to Sheridan, March 21, 1869.

The expedition against the southern tribes, particularly the Southern Cheyennes and Arapahos, was at an end, and Sheridan's strategy of striking the tribes during the winter had brought seemingly resounding success. On August 10, 1869, in an executive order, President Grant declared a new reservation for the Cheyennes and Arapahos in the western part of the Indian Territory in lieu of that designated for them in the Medicine Lodge Treaty.[65] Yet the peace would prove fleeting, as policies forged in the Grant administration by the mid-1870s spilled over into even broader warfare with the tribes of the Great Plains in a final struggle in which the Cheyennes and the other southern tribesmen would again be major players.[66]

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[65]The new Cheyenne and Arapaho reservation touched on the Cimarron River on the northeast and the North Fork of the Red River at the southwest, and included the Washita country embracing Fort Cobb, the Antelope Hills, and the scene of the army attack of November 27, 1868. For technical boundaries, see, Charles C. Royce (comp.), "Indian Land Cessions in the United States," in *Eighteenth Annual Report of the the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1896-97* (2 parts; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1899), Part 2, pp. 852-53.

[66]In addition to materials specifically cited above, this account of the post-Washita phase of Sheridan's campaign is drawn from the following sources: Sheridan's report, November 1, 1869; pp. 48-51; Custer to Sheridan, March 21, 1869; Letter, *St. Louis Republican*, reprinted in the *New York Times*, May 3, 1869, and in the *Army and Navy Journal*, May 8, 1869; Sheridan, *Personal Memoirs*, II, 323-47; Crawford, *Kansas in the Sixties*, pp. 325-35; Godfrey's account in clipping from an unidentified newspaper, ca. 1897-98. W.J. Ghent Papers, Library of Congress, Box 24, File 16; Moore, "Nineteenth Kansas Cavalry in the Washita Campaign," pp. 360-64; Hadley, "Nineteenth Kansas Cavalry," pp. 443-56; Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, pp. 329-39, 344; Leckie, *Military Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 106-13, 119-26; Hutton, *Phil Sheridan and His Army*, pp. 75-110; Brill, *Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 183-248. For succeeding events leading to the 1874 Red River War involving the Cheyennes and other tribes, and for the war itself, see, Leckie, *Military Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 133-235; James L. Haley, *The Buffalo War: The History of the Red River Indian Uprising of 1874* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1976); and John H. Monnett, *Massacre at Cheyenne Hole: Lieutenant Austin Henely and the Sappa Creek Controversy* (Niwot, Colo.: University Press of Colorado, 1999).

Chapter 9: Controversies

The attack on Black Kettle's village along the Washita once again devastated the Southern Cheyennes. It was the second time in four years--almost to the day--that this particular camp, regardless of its size, had felt the brunt of full-scale military assault. Whereas at Sand Creek the Colorado volunteers had swept down to visit upon the people a particularly heinous tragedy, at the Washita the assault by the United States regulars seemed in many ways a repetition of that event. But it also had the effect of resurrecting and punctuating among the Cheyennes the grievous wound of the earlier attack. Black Kettle, the leading proponent and spokesman for peace among his entire tribe had been struck down and silenced forever in an action that would doubtless produce after shocks for years within Cheyenne society while clouding the issue of peace in the near and distant future. Other wars with the tribesmen would come and go over the next decade before they all succumbed to the reality of reservation status. The days of freedom were gone forever.

The Washita action compounded existing difficulties within the Southern Cheyenne infrastructure originally wrought by the Sand Creek experience. Besides the deaths of Black Kettle and Little Rock, other headmen and leading warriors fell along with the women and children killed in Custer's assault, and the ripple effects of those losses among the families during the following weeks and months was profound. Mostly likely, the survivors of Black Kettle's village--already greatly diminished in size since Sand Creek--dispersed to other bands and camps, including those of Medicine Arrows and Little Robe, and that as an entity Black Kettle's village ceased to exist. In addition to the loss of lives, as well as to those women and

children taken prisoner by the soldiers, there was much material loss registered at the Washita, including the ponies and lodges and their contents. Winter was already a difficult experience, and the forfeiture of so many material goods complicated the difficulty of surviving in frigid temperatures, although this problem likely found temporary resolution as the village refugees joined relatives and friends in the other camps.[1]

One of the pretexts that later developed on which Custer and Sheridan hung their defense of the attack on Black Kettle dealt with the matter of captive whites presumably found in the Washita village. In his official report of the encounter to Sheridan dated November 28, 1868, Custer stated that "we . . . secured two white children, held captive by the Indians. One white woman who was in their possession was murdered by her captors the moment we attacked. A white boy held captive, about 10 years old, when about to be rescued, was brutally murdered by a squaw, who ripped out his entrails with a knife."[2] In transmitting Custer's report forward, General Sheridan repeated the essence of the remarks in his dispatch to Sherman of November 29: "Two white children were recaptured; one white woman and one boy 10 years old were

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[1]The post-engagement experiences of the Black Kettle village refugees must have been similar to those following the Sand Creek Massacre, although the physical magnitude of Chivington's strike greatly outweighed that at the Washita. George Bent expressed little about the direct Washita aftermath among the Cheyennes, perhaps because he had not been there. Bent, *Life of George Bent*, pp. 324ff. Neither Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, nor Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, contains much information regarding the post-Washita experience, suggesting that this phase of Southern Cheyenne history was never adequately recorded. That their immediate condition was poor is indicated in the following missive in which scouts had expressed that the Cheyennes were "in mourning for their losses, their people starving, their ponies dying, their dogs all eaten up, and no buffalo. . . . They are in a bad fix. . . ." Sheridan to AAG, Division of the Missouri, January 1, 1869. Sheridan Papers, Library of Congress, Microfilm roll 76.

[2]Custer's report, November 28, 1868, reproduced in Sen. Ex. Doc. No. 18, p. 25.

brutally murdered by the Indian women when the attack commenced."[3] But following Custer's arrival at Camp Supply, the two officers must have conferred at length and likely concluded that the statement could not be even reasonably justified. By then, however, the reports had gone forward bound for public consumption. Custer's references to the recapture of two white children and to the murder of a white woman at the commencement of the attack remain a mystery, possibly the result of miscommunication during, or in the hurried aftermath of, the fighting. Certainly, if two white children had been retrieved and presumably accompanied the column returning to Camp Supply, Custer must have seen them. The folly of Custer's statement, therefore, must have been apparent by the time he reached that post. While no formal correction to the public record, so far as is known, was ever made, both Custer's and Sheridan's subsequent descriptions of the Washita action mention neither the rescue of the children nor the murdered white woman, suggesting that these events, in fact, never happened.[4]

The second part of Custer's comment--that regarding the white boy who had been "brutally murdered by a squaw, who ripped out his entrails with a knife"--enjoyed a longer run, possibly because several military participants either witnessed such an incident during the

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[3]Ibid., p. 29.

[4]See Sheridan to Sherman, December 2, 1868, in in ibid., p. 40, and Sheridan's report of November 1, 1869, in *Report of the Secretary of War, 1869*, p. 48, in which the general justifies the Washita attack. See also, Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, pp. 241-71; and Sheridan, *Personal Memoirs*, II, 313-31. However, Keim's *Sheridan's Troopers*, published in 1885, still contained mention of the two white boys and the murder of the woman and child on p. 119. And Elizabeth B. Custer, in quoting her husband's 1868 report of the Washita engagement, included the references in her 1890 publication, *Following the Guidon*, p. 40.

encounter, or had learned of it conversationally shortly afterwards.[5] But even this seems not to have occurred as described. In 1904, Ben Clark, Custer's chief of scouts, told in an interview of witnessing the episode:

> I saw a Cheyenne squaw . . . kill her child with a butcher knife and then stabbed herself. Several of the soldiers thought she had murdered a white child. Some Cheyenne babies were almost as fair as white children, and one of the soldiers poked his carbine over the [river]bank and shot her through the head. In relating this incident in the history of the battle, Custer made the mistake of saying that this woman killed a captive white child.

Clark later confirmed his statement in an interview with Historian Walter M. Camp in 1910, thereby effectually dispelling this prevailing myth of the Washita.[6]

Besides these unsubstantiated references to whites in Black Kettle's village, some accounts in the aftermath of the action confusingly promoted the belief that Clara Blinn and her child were present there at the time of the engagement.[7] Nearly all of these insinuate that the

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[5]See, for example, Spotts, *Campaigning with Custer*, pp. 75-76; Mathey, "The Washita Campaign," p. 40; Ryan, *Ten Years*, p. 56; and Keim, *Sheridan's Troopers*, p. 119.

[6]*Kansas City Star*, December 4, 1904. See also, Clark's reminiscence published in the *New York Sun*, May 14, 1899, in which he recounted the incident, stating that "the sharpshooters mistook the child for a white captive." Clark's interview with Camp took place on October 22, 1910, and is presented, along with the *Star* account in Foley, "Walter Camp & Ben Clark," pp. 21, 23. Beyond the notation included in his report of November 28, 1868, cited above, Custer's description of the incident is in *My Life on the Plains*, pp. 243-44.

[7]This perception seems to have been most common among the Kansas volunteers, perhaps because they were not present and thus did not precisely comprehend the configuration of the Washita action. See, for example, Jenness, "History of the 19th Kansas Cavalry"; Moore,

Blinns' remains were found in or near Black Kettle's village. Mainstream accounts, however, place the discovery of the Blinns' bodies downstream from the scene of Custer's attack, removed even from the area of Elliott's action, with most reporting that they were found in the vicinity of the former Kiowa village.[8] While it is possible that some exchange had been implemented with the Kiowas that ultimately placed the Blinns in that tribe's downstream village, documentary evidence strongly suggests that they were with the Cheyennes, although most likely not with Black Kettle's people. If they had been in Black Kettle's village at the time of Custer's attack, they would have been found there, dead or alive. But that they were present in one or another village of Cheyennes there can be little doubt. Clara Blinn stated as much in her pleading letter of November 7, while Captain Alvord's Indian scouts placed her and her son with the Cheyennes as early as November 15th and as late as five days before the attack. Moreover, the Blinns were reported to be in "the large main camp" of the Cheyennes and Arapahos. This assemblage--moving separately from Black Kettle's village--included the camps of Medicine Arrows, Little Robe, Whirlwind, and other chiefs, and undoubtedly also included the captives Sarah C. White and Anna Belle Morgan.[9] An evaluation of the available evidence thus indicates that there were

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"Nineteenth Kansas Cavalry in the Washita Campaign," p. 358; Moore's account in the *Kansas City Times*, May 31, 1939; Crawford, *Kansas in the Sixties*, p. 325; Hadley, "Nineteenth Kansas Cavalry," pp. 444-45; and W.R. Smith, letter, in *The National Tribune*, March 26, 1925.

[8]*New York Herald*, January 4, 1869 (repeated in Keim's *Sheridan's Troopers*, p. 150); Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, p. 290; Sheridan, *Personal Memoirs*, II, 330-31. Ben Clark believed the Blinns were found at the site of the former Arapaho camp. Clark to Barde, May 1, 1903. Barde Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society; Foley, "Walter Camp & Ben Clark," p. 21.

[9]Justus, "Saga of Clara H. Blinn," p. 13; "Semi-Weekly Report No. 1. Summary of information relating to Indians," November 22, 1868; and "Semi-Weekly Report No. 2. Summary of Information regarding hostile Indians," November 26, 1868. Military Division of

no whites in Black Kettle's village at the time of the army assault.

Nor is there evidence to support the notion that Black Kettle was personally to blame for the events that precipitated the attack. Whatever the role the young men of his village played in the episodes that occurred in eastern Kansas during the summer and early autumn of 1868, the incidents reflected instilled behavioral tenets of Cheyenne society that were beyond Black Kettle's--much less anybody else's--power to modify and thus prevent. That the chief moved his people south of the Arkansas to be beyond complicity in the Kansas events testifies strongly to his personal resolve to avoid conflict if at all possible and represented a pattern consistent with his historical behavior. Unfortunately for Black Kettle and his people, the army hierarchy neither fathomed the socio-cultural dynamics of Plains Indian societies nor chose to discriminate between guilty and innocent parties in its condemnation and prosecution for the Kansas raids. Because of this blanket indictment, Black Kettle and his followers consequently suffered for the sins of probably few of his people. As stated, in accordance with the Medicine Lodge Treaty the Indians had a right to be on the Washita, south of their prescribed reservation. That Custer ironically stumbled onto Black Kettle's village--detached as it was from the downriver camps--was pure chance, but in light of Sand Creek represented something of a cruel twist in the vicissitudes of fortune.

Neither in his report nor in his later memoir did Custer explain finding evidence implicating Black Kettle and his people in the Kansas raids. That enumeration appeared first in General Sheridan's communication of January 1, 1869, in which he referred to "mules taken

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the Missouri Papers. Reports of Officers in the West and Southwest, 1874-75. U.S. Army Military History Institute. Mrs. Blinn did not refer to White and Morgan in her letter, suggesting that these women were kept together in another village.

from [Captain] Carpenter's train, mail matter carried by our murdered couriers, photographs stolen from the scenes of outrages on the Solomon and Saline" as being found in Black Kettle's village. He further stated that "I have their own illustrated history, found in their captured camps, showing the different fights or murders this band was engaged in; the trains attacked, the hay parties attacked about Fort Wallace; the women, citizens, and soldiers killed."[10] The general elaborated on these finds in his annual report of November 1, 1869, as follows:

> We found in Black Kettle's village photographs and daguerreotypes, clothing, and bedding, from the houses of the persons massacred on the Solomon and Saline. The mail which I had sent by the expressmen, Nat Marshal and Bill Davis, from Bluff Creek to Fort Dodge, who were murdered and mutilated, was likewise found; also a large blank book, with Indian illustrations of the different fights which Black Kettle's band had been engaged in, especially about Fort Wallace and on the line of the Denver stages; showing when the fight had been with the colored troops--when with white; also, when trains had been captured and women killed in wagons.[11]

Sheridan's remarks offered a strong indictment of Black Kettle's people. Most intriguing of the items Sheridan mentioned was the ledger book with illustrations testifying to the connivance complicity of the chief's followers in the raids. A careful reading of the general's initial reference to this document, wherein he stated that it had surfaced "in their captured *camps*" (plural emphasized) suggests that this evidence, with which he promoted Black Kettle's guilt,

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[10]Sheridan to Sheriman, January 1, 1869, in House Ex. Doc. No. 240, p. 242.

[11]*Report of the Secretary of War, 1869*, p. 48.

was found, in fact, among the vestiges of the downriver camps. Otherwise, this incriminating chronicle would most certainly have been seized upon much earlier as a device with which to further validate Custer's attack. The disposition and present location of the ledger book, if it still exists, has not been determined.[12]

For the Seventh Cavalry, the Washita encounter generated considerable enduring trauma, mostly resulting from the debate arising within the regiment over whether Custer consciously and purposefully abandoned Major Elliott and his men to their fate. While heretofore latent seeds of dissension perhaps dated back to the unit's organization in 1866, following Washita the searing fissures suddenly rushed front and center. Their impetus lay in the publication of an anonymous letter later claimed by Captain Benteen to have been written by himself, bluntly asserting that Elliott's force had gone to their deaths having first been forsaken by Custer and then, in the colonel's desperation to remove his command from the proximity of the downriver villages, abandoned by him altogether. "Surely some search will be made for our missing comrades," mocked Benteen's piece, before concluding, "No, they are forgotten." The captain, no friend of Custer's, had mailed the missive from Fort Cobb to a friend on December 22. Custer learned of its publication upon returning to Camp Supply in late March, sparking a sharp verbal confrontation between the two officers after Benteen admitted to its authorship.[13] Most accounts

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[12]Barnett, *Touched by Fire*, pp. 163-64.

[13]*Missouri Democrat* (St. Louis), February 9, 1869. The sarcasm-laden letter is reproduced in Graham, *The Custer Myth*, pp. 212-13. The Custer-Benteen confrontation is described by Benteen in John M. Carroll (ed.), *The Benteen-Goldin Letters on Custer and His Last Battle* (New York: Liveright, 1974), pp. 266-27. See also, Charles Francis Bates, *Custer's Indian Battles* (Bronxville, N.Y.: Privately published, 1936), pp. 15-16. Ben Clark claimed that Benteen had approached him within days of the engagement when it was believed that Elliott and his followers had been killed "and asked me if I would be willing to make the statement that

suggests that Custer remained unaware of Elliott's whereabouts until long after the major and his seventeen volunteers had departed downstream in pursuit of a party of Cheyennes fleeing the village. As stated, when Lieutenant Godfrey reported the additional villages downstream, as well as the sounds of shooting he had heard during his movement in that direction, Custer initially dismissed the latter information, believing that a squad under Captain Myers operating downstream would have reported it. As second in command, Elliott was a significant fixture in the command hierarchy, and his whereabouts on the field would have been important knowledge in the wake of the opening assault. Similarly, Sergeant Major Walter M. Kennedy was the senior enlisted man in the regiment. But seemingly, their disappearance was obscured in the onrush of succeeding events. By the time Elliott's absence was noted, the lateness of the hour and the need to extricate his command from its position preempted Custer's rapt effort to search longer for the detachment, by then presumed dead, and, if necessary, recover the bodies, although flankers kept watch for signs of the missing party during the downstream march. While it is difficult to ascertain what more Custer could have done under the circumstances immediately confronting him late on the afternoon of November 27, General Sheridan was not satisfied with his subordinate's feeble explanation of Elliott's disappearance.[14] The incident, seemingly aggravated

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Custer knowingly let Elliott go to his doom without trying to save him. I refused to have anythng to do with the matter." *New York Sun*, May 14, 1899.

[14]Custer did not discuss aspects of the loss of Elliott and his men in his report of November 28, 1868. Sen. Ex. Doc. No. 18, p. 26. His brief account of Elliott's disappearance and presumed demise is in *My Life on the Plains*, pp. 246-47, 257-58; his quoted remarks from Sheridan's report respecting Elliott's fight are in ibid., pp. 286-89. Sheridan wrote that Custer's theory was "that Elliott and his men had strayed off on account of having no guide, and would ultimately come in all right to Camp Supply or make their way back to Fort Dodge." *Personal Memoirs*, II, 320. Ben Clark, who was present at the Washita, stated years later that "the charge was made against Custer in after years that he gave the order which led Elliott to his death and

by Benteen's offensive letter, became a hot topic of conversation within the regiment, leading to untold speculation and supposedly producing a factionalism within the officer cadre. It has since been viewed as having aggravated discord and partisanship so strong as to influence the personal and professional interrelationships to the degree of affecting the Seventh's performance in subsequent campaigns up to, and including, that climaxing at the Little Big Horn River eight years hence.[15]

The most enduring controversy emanating from the Washita is whether the action should be classified as a battle or a massacre. Nearly everyone who has heard of Custer's attack on Black Kettle's Cheyennes holds an opinion about its proper nomenclature. Yet any substantive discussion must have established at the outset the structure of authoritative definition regarding what the terms mean. According to one well-known dictionary, "battle" described "a general encounter between armies," that was usually "a general and prolonged combat."[16] A prominent military dictionary of the late nineteenth century presented much the same meaning, but further identified an "offensive battle," in which "an army seeks the enemy and attacks him wherever he

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then abandoned him to his fate. This accusation was false. Custer knew nothing of Elliott's going. Half an hour after Elliott and his men rode away Custer came up and asked me what had become of Elliott." *New York Sun*, May 14, 1899.

[15]On this divisive issue, see Utley, *Cavalier in Buckskin*, pp. 75-76; and Barnett, *Touched by Fire*, pp. 160-63. This controversy, along with others stemming from the Washita action, is discussed at length in Watson and Russell, "Battle of the Washita, or Custer's Massacre?", *passim*.

[16]*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, based on Webster's New International Dictionary* (2nd ed.; Springfield, Mass.: G. and C. Merriam Company, Publishers, 1959), p. 74.

is to be found."[17] *The American Heritage College Dictionary*, 2000 edition, described "massacre" as "the act or an instance of cruel, indiscriminate killing of a large number of human beings,"[18] while the military dictionary defined it as "the killing of human beings by indiscriminate slaughter, murder of numbers with cruelty or atrocity, or contrary to the usages of civilized people; cold-blooded destruction of life; butchery; carnage."[19]

Granted these semantical parameters, the action on the Washita must be viewed on grounds of whether the events that occurred there on November 27, 1868, were of sufficient form and magnitude to classify them one way or the other. Given the War Department's mandate that all of the Cheyennes were guilty for the sins of the few in regard to the Kansas raids, there is no question that Custer succeeded in his purpose in attacking Black Kettle's village. His instructions from his superiors had been "to destroy their villages and ponies; to kill or hang all warriors, and bring back all women and children."[20] In effect, Custer had carried out an offensive strike against one village. But whether it was truly an "offensive battle" remains murky because that term's definition assumed that the enemy was an opposing army and not a

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[17]Thomas Wilhelm, *A Military Dictionary and Gazetteer* (Revised edition; Philadelphia: L.R. Hamersly and Company, 1881), p. 52. Further exposition of the concept of "offensive battle" appears in Edward S. Farrow, *Farrow's Military Encyclopedia: A Dictionary of Military Knowledge* (revised ed.; 3 vols.; New York: Military-Naval Publishing Company, 1895), II, 432-33.

[18]*The American Heritage College Dictionary* (3rd ed.; Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), p. 835.

[19]Wilhelm, *Military Dictionary*, p. 310. "Indiscriminate" means "not discriminate; showing lack of discrimination or distinction." Synonyms include "wholesale" and "sweeping," meaning "including all within the range of choice or operation." *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, p. 425.

[20]Quoted in Keim, *Sheridan's Troopers*, p. 103.

village containing large numbers of noncombatants.

Certainly, for the tribesmen who experienced the early morning attacks on their homes and families, wherein bullets from the charging forces ripped through the lodges, every army assault must have seemed like a massacre.[21] For Black Kettle's Cheyennes, ever skittish following Chivington's butchery at Sand Creek--an encounter that embodied every characteristic of the term--Custer's attack must have seemed especially brutal--in many ways a figurative exclamation point to the earlier carnage and a sequel that in their troubled existence they had anticipated for a long time. Yet Washita exhibited aspects that--by definition--were significantly different from what happened at Sand Creek. Most notably, it was not an indiscriminate slaughter. While there exists substantial evidence that some noncombatants were killed by soldiers in the course of the confusion and excitement of the initial charge, some of these deaths likely could not have been avoided given the nature of the army's warfare methodology. "In the excitement of the fight, as well as in self-defense," explained Custer, ". . . some of the squaws and a few children were killed and wounded."[22] And Lieutenant Godfrey remembered that during the charge the assailants made no effort "to prevent hitting women."[23] Despite such

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[21]For discussion of the convergence or encirclement tactic, see Jamieson, *Crossing the Deadly Ground*, pp. 44-46. Beyond Washita, the army used similar tactics (with varying elements as well as levels of success) in attacking Indian villages at Blue Water Creek, Nebraska, September 3, 1855; Summit Springs, Colorado, July 11, 1869; McClellan Creek, Texas, September 29, 1872; Snake Mountain, Wyoming, July 4, 1874; Powder River, Wyoming, March 17, 1876; Slim Buttes, Dakota, September 9, 1876; Red Fork of Powder River, Wyoming, November 25, 1876; Muddy Creek, Montana, May 7, 1877; Big Hole, Montana, August 9, 1877; and Bear's Paw Mountains, Montana, September 30, 1877. It is likely, too, that the tactics were to have been employed at the Little Big Horn, on June 25, 1876.

[22]Custer's report, November 28, 1868, reproduced in Sen. Ex. Doc. No. 18, p. 26.

[23]Godfrey Interview, March 3, 1917. Camp Papers, BYU, Box 3 (microfilm).

losses, the troops evidently took some measures to protect the women and children. Custer claimed to have earlier enjoined his men "to prevent the killing of any but the fighting strength of the village," and soon after the initial charge he directed that Captain Myers's action in chasing a group of women and children be halted and that these people be taken to a designated lodge to be kept there under guard. He later sent Romero to assure other women and children who had remained in their lodges during the attack that they would not be harmed. By most accounts, however, many of the women who fell in the attack were victims of the Osage scouts, traditional enemies of the Cheyennes. The directions to the troops to protect women and children and to take them prisoner, however, did not extend to the men, and, as Ben Clark pointed out, *all* warriors who lay wounded in the village--presumably no matter the extent of their injuries--were summarily executed by the soldiers in a very discriminating manner. At least fifty-three women and children taken captive at the Washita immediately served as assurance against attack from the downriver peoples during Custer's extrication of his command from the scene late on November 27. They accompanied the troops to Camp Supply and later to Fort Hays, where they were incarcerated in a stockade. Certain of them, including Black Kettle's sister, played instrumental roles in inducing the surrenders that followed. The fact that during the course of the fighting attempts were made to save and protect these women and children, and that they were thereafter taken north as prisoners where they became the subject of manuscript and photographic documentation of their status, necessarily disqualifies Washita as a massacre under the term's definition of "indiscriminate, merciless killing" and "indiscriminate slaughter."[24]

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[24]Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, p. 244; New *York Sun*, May 14, 1899; Kansas *City Star*, December 4, 1904; Clark letter in *Overland Monthly*, November, 1909; Foley, "Walter Camp & Ben Clark," p. 22; Brill, *Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 156-57. Clark told Walter Camp

Yet at least one act often associated with massacres--including that at Sand Creek--indeed found its way into the Washita proceedings. In the various accounts of the action there appear several references to instances of scalping--the practice whereby part of the hair-bearing flesh on a human head was cut or torn from its victim as a token of revenge or of victory. Clearly, the society that the army represented generally viewed scalping as a form of mutilation. But it is documented that at the Washita the Osage scouts took scalps from the Cheyennes that they killed during the attack. That these acts occurred there can be no doubt, and its repetition on the field was evidently sanctioned because scalping represented ingrained cultural behavior on the part of the Osages (as it also did among the Cheyennes), was thereby condoned as an aspect of intertribal warfare, and any attempt by the troops to curtail its practice among their Indian allies would have offended them. Indeed, one account described an extreme case where an Osage scout killed a

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that "No women were killed by soldiers in cold blood. Some were killed unavoidably. The Osage Indians killed some before they were stopped." Foley, "Walter Camp & Ben Clark," p. 20. Custer claimed to have admonished his men against killing noncombatants, with the caveat that in hand-to-hand fighting the women and youths might present as formidable adversaries as the warriors. *My Life on the Plains*, p. 241. In describing Romero's mission, Custer wrote that "it was difficult to convince the squaws and children that they had anything but death to expect at our hands." Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, p. 244. The order against killing noncombatants apparently was common knowledge in the weeks after the assault. Private Spotts noted in his diary that he had learned that "many of the squaws and children escaped during the fight because the orders were to spare the women and children. . . ." *Campaigning with Custer*, p. 75.

In addition, the number of fatalities at the Washita has never been authoritatively determined. While Custer claimed that his command had killed 103 warriors (later revised, reportedly according to information acquired from the Indians, to 140 total Indians killed), the Cheyennes themselves in fact offered figures that were mere fractions of the former number, registering on average twelve men killed and twenty women and children killed, for a total fatality figure of about thirty-two people from among approximately 250 present when the attack commenced. Adding in the fifty-three prisoners, it appears that about 165 villagers, many doubtless wounded or otherwise injured, managed to escape the onslaught and flee to the downriver camps. (The calculation of fatalities is based on casualty figures presented in chapter 7. See Appendix B for a presentation accounting for at least fifty-eight Cheyennes killed.)

Cheyenne and completely beheaded the body. The Osages seem to have been particularly severe in their treatment of Cheyenne women, reportedly beating them with switches as they tried to run away, and then scalping and otherwise mutilating the ones they killed.[25] Beyond these incidents involving the scouts, there occurred occasional scalpings (at least two) by members of Custer's command, although the practice among the soldiers that day appears to have been infrequent.[26]

Without question, the occurrence of these offenses helped color the Washita encounter and contributed to it qualities reminiscent of a full-fledged massacre. But more than anything, the army's own Indian-fighting tactics bolstered that perception, especially as the concept of "offensive battle" became transposed on the frontier to embrace not surprise attacks upon otherwise prepared adversaries, but dawn attacks on enclaves normally containing a high percentage of sleeping noncombatants. Such procedure comprised the army's *modus operandi* of the Indian wars period. This kind of engagement, which in the West preceded the Civil War (and was therefore perhaps coincidental precursor of the so-called "total war" strategy later enacted by Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan, wherein civilian populations were no longer exempted from the cataclysmic violence of war), often resulted in the deaths of women, children, and the elderly. This fact, while accepted among the officer cadre to varying degree, did not change the existing

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[25]For scalping on the part of the Osages, see, Custer's report, November 28, 1868, in Sen. Ex. Doc. No. 18, p. 25, which charged the Osages with taking the scalp of Black Kettle. See also, *New York Herald*, December 24, 1868; Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, p. 256; and *NewYork Sun*, May 14, 1899. For the whipping of women fleeing the village, see Brill, *Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 156-57; and Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, I, 606. Clark stated that the Osages "before they could be intercepted, shot down the women and mutilated their bodies, cutting off their arms, legs and breasts with knives." *New York Sun*, May 14, 1899.

[26]For instances of army scalping, see, Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, pp. 256-57; and Ryan, *Ten Years*, pp. 53-54.

definition of "battle." The army justified these mission-oriented tactics as imperative to control highly mobile belligerent native populations with the long-range objective of protecting American citizens on the frontier.[27] Clearly, the tactic accommodated a prevalent and none-too-subtle perception of Indians as inferior beings from less significant and more expendable cultures ultimately destined for oblivion.[28] Clearly, too, the very nature of this combat methodology, embracing as it did a theory of conscienceless total destruction of men and resources, in practice often balanced hazardously on the precipice of "massacre" and accordingly promoted--and continues to promote--its frequent correlation with that term. For the Cheyennes at the Washita in 1868, with the specter of the Sand Creek Massacre ever at hand, Custer's force delivered the quintessential example of this ruthless and remorseless form of warfare, one that would be emulated with varying results against other tribes in the West over the next decade.[29]

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[27]A modern study that analyzed Sand Creek and Washita relative to the existing Laws of War (promulgated throughout the army in General Orders No. 100 as issued in April, 1863) concluded that the former affair was indeed a violation of those principles, but that within the context of its time the Washita attack was justified. See Vernon T. Veggeberg, "Laws of War on the American Frontier: General Orders 100 and the Cheyenne-White Conflict" (unpublished master thesis, 1999, Colorado State University).

[28]For Darwinian views regarding Indians, see, Henry E. Fritz, *The Movement for Indian Assimilation, 1860-1890* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963), pp. 114, 123-24.

[29]Several true massacres occurred during the course of army-Indian relations in the trans-Mississippi West and influenced the course of Indian-white relations on the frontier during the last half of the nineteenth century. One, of course, was Sand Creek, a clearly premeditated and indisputable human catastrophe in which at least 150 Cheyennes and Arapahos were killed. The others were the premeditated Bear River Massacre of Shoshoni Indians on January 19, 1863, in which at least 250 tribesmen perished; the Marias River Massacre (so-called Baker "Battle") of January 23, 1870, wherein troops assailed a camp of Piegan Indians in northwestern Montana Territory leaving 173 people dead; and the Wounded Knee Massacre of December 29, 1890, resulting from an escalating confrontation between troops and Lakotas on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota in which Indian fatalities numbered at least 250. Fatality figures for

these encounters are from *Bear River Massacre Site: Final Special Resource Study and Environmental Assessment* (Denver: National Park Service, 1996), p. 16; *Reconnaissance Survey of Indian-U.S. Army Battlefields of the Northern Plains* (Denver: National Park Service, 1998), p. 85; and Richard E. Jensen, R. Eli Paul, and John E. Carter, *Eyewitness at Wounded Knee* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), p. 20.

Chapter 10: Monumentation and Resources

Less than five years after the attack on Black Kettle's village, a surveyor going over the ground of Section 12, Township 13 North, Range 23 West, saw evidence of the struggle there, including "the bones of mules and ponies and skulls of men." During the following decades, the country gradually filled up as the Cheyennes and Arapahos relinquished through lease and allotment parts of their reservation granted them by executive order in 1869.[1] Twenty-three years after the attack, a U.S. Army officer stationed with the Seventh Cavalry at Fort Sill visited the site. All that then remained identifiable on the ground was an old cottonwood tree reportedly blazed by the Cheyennes to designate the spot near the stream where Black Kettle had fallen. Concerned that the location of the engagement would likely be lost and forgotten as settlement increased in Roger Mills County, First Lieutenant Hugh L. Scott determined to raise a marker to commemorate the action. For three days in January, 1891, he and his escort, aided by a military ambulance, searched the vicinity for large rocks suitable for a monument. Scott then commissioned one of his party, Sergeant Thomas Clancy, a former stone mason, to inscribe a large, flat, red sandstone slab with the inscription, "7th CAV," followed by "Nov. 27, 1868." The stone pile, surmounted by the carved slab, was built on the south side of the Washita at the site of Black Kettle's village. A number of horse skulls collected from the spot where in 1868 the soldiers had killed the Cheyenne ponies were placed around the foot of the marker. Fearing

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[1]Survey field notes of H.C. Hackbusch, June, 1873. Survey record books, Roger Mills County Court House, Cheyenne, Oklahoma. 1873 survey map, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Donald J. Berthrong, *The Cheyenne and Arapaho Ordeal* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), pp. 91-181.

that an influx of settlement would harm both the marker and Black Kettle's tree, Scott wrote to area newspapers to urge residents to protect them.

Scott's makeshift monument to his regiment, occasionally knocked over by floodwater and cattle and then rebuilt,[2] remained more or less intact until the early twentieth century, when the bottom land became increasingly used for grazing. Some time after 1902, landowners dismantled the marker and moved the sandstone slab to a "little red hill"--the Custer observation knoll, in fact--south of the former village location. By then, too, many of the horse bones, including the skulls from the base of the monument, had been removed by local residents for sale to a Texas fertilizer company.[3] Black Kettle's tree likely died or was removed during this period. Occasional visitors to the area chipped pieces from the rock for souvenirs. By 1910, Mrs. W.T. Bonner, wife of the owner of the land encompassing the village site, had organized a ladies' group in Cheyenne for the purpose of erecting a permanent memorial on the ground. Eight years later, however, historian Joseph B. Thoburn of the Oklahoma Historical Society notified then Major General Scott that his sandstone marker, though weathered and evidently lying flat on the surface, still graced the site. "If we succeed in having a permanent marker placed there within the next few years, as I hope we may, that stone, which you had inscribed and placed as a temporary marker, should be brought here and preserved in the collections of this society."[4]

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[2]The pile was rebuilt once by Seventh Cavalry officer Second Lieutenant Allyn K. Capron, whose sudden death in combat as a "Rough Rider" under Colonel Theodore Roosevelt in the Santiago Campaign of 1898 drew widespread media attention.

[3]A view of the slab, *sans* surrounding stones and skulls, as relocated on the hill, appears in *Kansas City Star*, December 4, 1904.

[4]Thoburn to Scott, April 3, 1918. Thoburn Collection, WA-3, File 11, Box 33, 86.01.

Thoburn was interested in unveiling and dedicating a permanent commemorative marker at the Washita site during observance of its fiftieth anniversary, and long-retired Brigadier General Edward S. Godfrey, who had participated in the engagement, indicated a desire to make a "pilgrimage" to the site, though he did not, finally, attend. During the 1920s, Sheriff James M. Lester removed the inscribed stone of Scott's monument to the corridor of the court house in Cheyenne to preserve it. (The stone is presently housed in the Black Kettle Museum.)

In the autumn of 1930, two aged Cheyennes, Magpie and Little Beaver, visited the site and pointed out places significant in the action, including that of the village. At the pony kill area, hundreds of bones still could be seen. In November of that year, during a Thanksgiving ceremony coinciding with the sixty-second anniversary of the encounter, the remains of a warrior killed defending his home and family, uncovered in 1914 during a railroad excavation project, were buried north of the highway and south of where Black Kettle's village had stood as the citizens of Cheyenne, Oklahoma, dedicated a memorial to all of the Indian people killed at the Washita. During the ceremony, Chief Magpie, who had been wounded in the army attack, spoke charitably to a throng numbering in the thousands, telling them that "he forgave Gen. Custer for the part he had in the Battle of the Washita, and that he prayed God to forgive Custer." Early in 1933, through the efforts of the Platonic Club of Cheyenne, a red granite marker with the words, "Custer's Battle, November 27, 1868" was erected near the grave.[5]

Yet another marker was erected in 1956--a brick-based monument, raised north of state

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[5]*The Cheyenne Star*, December 5, 1930, July 21, 1932, and January 19, 1933. See also, Kline E. Casady, *Once Every Five Years* (Oklahoma City, 1974), p. 70. Late in 1930, Congressman James V. McClintic introduced a bill in the House of Representatives seeking an appropriation of $10,000 to erect a monument "to honor Chief Black Kettle and all American soldiers who died in the battle." *The Cheyenne Star*, December 11, 1930.

route 47A overlooking the site and funded by popular subscription, on which was depicted the date of the Washita engagement together with a map of Oklahoma. The existence of this structure was temporary, however, for it was removed in the 1960s. In 1958, the Black Kettle Museum was erected by the State of Oklahoma, and as the centennial of the Washita engagement approached, the site became the focal point for more observances. On April 17, 1962, the Oklahoma Industrial and Development Board placed a large, granite interpretive panel near state route 47A that briefly told the story of Custer's attack on the Cheyenne encampment. Next year, the State of Oklahoma acquired three acres encompassing this marker along state route 47A and established an overlook park there. On October 22, 1965, Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall unveiled a plaque designating the scene of the Washita engagement as a National Historic Landmark.[6] All of this activity culminated three years later, at a ceremony commemorating the 100th anniversary, when Indian remains found in 1934 during bridge excavation work were consigned to eternity in a flag circle near the county court house and the Black Kettle Museum in Cheyenne. The inscription on the granite plaque read: "The unknown who lies here is in commemoration of Chief Black Kettle and the Cheyenne tribal members who lost their lives in the Battle of the Washita."[7] In 1983, the site, designated "Washita Battlefield," was included on

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[6]*The Cheyenne Star*, October 21, 1965; Casady, *Once Every Five Years*, p. 136.

[7]Francis Thetford, "Battle of the Washita Centennial, 1968," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 46 (Winter, 1968-69), p. 360. See the account of Lawrence Hart, a Cheyenne tribal participant in the centennial observance, in Warde, "Oral History Research," pp. 9-11. This overview of monumentation is drawn from the following materials: *New York Sun*, May 14, 1899; Lewis N. Hornbeck, "The Battle of the Washita," *Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine*, 5 (January, 1908), pp. 30, 31, 34; Hugh Lenox Scott, *Some Memories of a Soldier* (New York: The Century Company, 1928), p. 153; Barnitz to Thoburn, November 16, 1910. Thoburn Collection, WA-2, File 11, Box 33, 86.01; Scott to Walter M. Camp, December 4, 1910. Camp Papers, Box 1, Folder 15; W. Scott Samuel to Colonel Campbell, February 8, 1918. Thoburn Collection,

the National Register of Historic Places, and in 1996, following an agreement between the federal government and the State of Oklahoma, the Washita encounter site, encompassing a core area of 320 acres, became a unit of the National Park system.[8]

The efforts to memorialize in stone the army attack on Black Kettle's village, as well as to learn particulars of the event from Indian participants, represent the importance of the event in American history, not only as it reflected the immediate state of Cheyenne-army relations in 1868, but also as it affected the Cheyenne people and the course of their long-term relationship with the U.S. Government during the years and decades that followed. Historically, Washita is significant as representing the ultimate manifestation of culture conflict resulting from the failure of intercultural diplomacy and the treaty system. It further embodies the optimum example of the military strategy of the winter offensive in dealing with the Plains tribes, while affording perhaps the pre-eminent illustration of all post-Civil War army-Indian combat wherein execution of the tactic of encirclement and early morning assault became a hallmark.

The land composing the scene of the army attack on Black Kettle's village promotes the interpretation of not only its significance but of many of the terrain features that contributed to the event, allowing visitors to achieve a broader and thus richer comprehension of what happened

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WA-2, File 11, Box 33, 86.01; Thoburn to Godfrey, September 20, 1918, and Godfrey to Thoburn, September 24, 1918. Ibid.; *The Daily Oklahoman*, July 27, 1930; clipping from an unidentified newspaper, November 26, 1930. Lee Harkins Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society; Howard F. Van Zandt, "The Battle of the Washita, Revisited: A Journey to a Historic Site in 1933," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 62 (Spring, 1984), pp. 57-65; *The Daily Press* (Woodward, Oklahoma), November 13, 1968.

[8]The National Park Service tract comprises the north one-half of Section 12, Township 13 North, Range 23 West, Indian Prime Meridian.

there.[9] The 1996 enabling legislation called on the National Park Service "to protect and preserve 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." The following properties, regardless of their location within or without the park service tract (or, for some, of their tangible existence), have been determined to possess degrees of historical value (and in some cases, integrity) sufficient to sustain the interpretation and future development plans of Washita Battlefield National Historic Site. (See accompanying Historic Base Map.)

1. **Black Kettle's Village**. Black Kettle's village, numbering fifty-one lodges (a few of which were not Cheyenne) and including as many as 250 people, was on the south side of the stream and for the most part situated in a northward jutting loop of the Washita. All of the area of the village is presently incorporated within the boundary of Washita Battlefield National Historic Site, although the configuration of the river at this point has drastically changed since the early 1900s. Ben Clark, the former chief scout accompanying the troops in 1868, visited the scene on several occasions. In 1899 he described the village site as "an admirable camping place in a big bend of the river, on a level stretch of ground."[10] In 1904, he returned to point out to a news correspondent various features connected with the engagement. By then, much of the timber along the river had been felled. Respecting the village site, the correspondent wrote:

> Where Black Kettle's village stood is now a meadow. The land has never been

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[9]Public Law 104-333, November 12, 1996.

[10]*New York Sun*, May 14, 1899.

> plowed, as the Washita rises and overflows it every spring. The Washita flows from the west against an almost perpendicular bank which marks the break of the high prairie on the south as it descends suddenly to the level floor of the river valley. Then the river turns northward for about a thousand yards and turns again to the wall-like embankment of the prairie. Surrounded on two sides by this goose-neck bend of the river and flanked on the south by the higher ground, is a tract of about twenty-five acres, the old Indian camp ground.[11]

Fortunately, through the efforts of Oklahoma historian Fred S. Barde, who recorded the course of the stream in the north half of Section 12 before major rechanneling projects altered it, the appearance of the loop, and thus the historic scene, can be approximated with some degree of accuracy. Barde's map, possibly derived with the assistance of Ben Clark, indicated that "gun cartridges & bangles [decorative cone-shaped tinklers used as Cheyenne clothing ornaments]" had been found in the southern part of the loop.[12] The area remained largely undeveloped as late as 1910, when Walter M. Camp, who visited the site with Clark, wrote that the Washita "flows in precisely the same channel that it did in 1868. . . . The identical ground on which the village of Black Kettle stood has not been ploughed up yet."[13] Clark reported that the village was in the northeast quarter, Section 12, Township 13 N, Range 24 W. "The river bends sharply to the

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[11]*Kansas City Star*, December 4, 1904.

[12]Barde Map. Fred Barde Collection, 82.80, Box 42, # 3 (oversized). Manuscripts Division, Oklahoma Historical Society. Barde's map, superimposed on a section map, shows successively refined pencil drawings of the loop where the village was situated, together with other encounter-related landscape features as they existed in ca. 1900.

[13]Camp to Barnitz, ca. October-November, 1910, quoted in Barnitz to Thoburn, November 16, 1910. Thoburn Collection, BA. I.C. .948 File Box 86.01.

north and from the bluff where the horses were shot, out to the bend, the area is about 30 acres. The village was in the northwest corner of the bend. . . ."[14] Without doubt, the channeling project, which occurred between 1910 and 1930, along with ongoing relic collecting and increased agricultural activity, caused the loss of other artifacts in the Washita bottom that would likely have further confirmed the precise location of Black Kettle's village.[15]

2. **Site of Black Kettle's Lodge**. The chief's tipi stood near the river in the western part of the village, apparently slightly west of the major loop, in a smaller bend, somewhere in what is now the bottom half of the northwest quarter of Section 12. A few other tipis were located there, too, but most had been raised in the north-jutting encircling bend. A giant cottonwood tree grew nearby. Reportedly, only one lodge stood farther west, that of Big Man, who was related to Black Kettle and who was the father of Magpie, who years later provided Cheyenne perspectives of the events there. Years later, the large cottonwood tree was used to designate the place where Black Kettle's tipi had stood.[16]

3. **Observation Ridge**. The spot from which the Osage scouts Little Beaver and Hard Rope discovered Black Kettle's village during the night of November 26-27 is on rising ground in the

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[14]Camp notes, Ben Clark, 1910. Lilly Library. See also, Ben Clark map, 1897.

[15]See Cowley, *Cultural Landscape Inventory*, p. 60; and C. Vance Haynes, "Late Quaternary Geology of the Washita Battlefield: A Tentative Assessment" (report dated November 8, 1995, in the files of the Washita Battlefield National Historic Site), p. 3.

[16]Frank Rush, "What Indian Tongues Could Tell: The Red Man's Story of the Conquest of the Western Plains," *Wilds and Waters*, 3 (December, 1930), p. 13 (map). (Hereafter cited as Rush map); Brill, *Conquest of the Southern Plains*, p. 132.

northeast quarter of Section 2, Township 13 North, Range 24 West, about one mile northwest of the village site. Custer and his officers, said Clark, "lay on this very spot and spied out the village and the lay of the land."[17]

4. **Army Pre-attack Staging Area**. In 1904, Clark stood on the property of a man named Kirtley and, pointing northwest, told an interviewer that "there is where the troops came down from the divide and in that cotton field is where the men dismounted."[18] The site is in the southwest of the northeast quarter of Section 2. In 1910, A.G. Smith owned the property, and Clark told Camp that "the command was halted on the ground right north of this barn." Then the troops evidently moved lower down to a tract owned in 1910 by Frank Turner. "It is on flat ground lower than the barn & north of barn."[19]

5. **Custer's Attack Route**. Custer and his four companies (A, C, D, and K), besides the scouts, sharpshooters, and regimental band, attacked from the northwest. Lieutenant Godfrey later claimed that "Custer's immediate command . . . moved into place facing nearly east. . . . Following the General [Custer], the command marched over the crest of the ridge and advanced some distance to another lower ridge."[20] Based on knowledge of Custer's position during the night of November 26-27, the route of his attack toward the village likely followed a broad swath

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[17]*Kansas City Star*, December 4, 1904; Rush map.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Camp notes, Ben Clark, 1910. Lilly Library.

[20]"Battle of the Washita," p. 490.

leading down to the river through Sections 2 and 1. From all accounts, Cook's sharpshooters approached along a course to the left of Custer's main command and fairly fronted on the tribesmen at the northernmost part of the river bend after the attack opened. Barde learned that as the assault commenced Custer crossed the stream at the northwest corner of the loop where two big cottonwood trees were standing in about 1900. As the troops fanned out in the village, he continued his diagonal to the southeast, passing through the tumult to ascend a knoll to the south.[21]

6. **Thompson's Attack Route**. Custer directed Captain William Thompson, commanding a squadron composed of Companies B and F, to march to the west of the command, then in a broad circular movement turn south and cross the Washita, keeping his men beneath the hills, and coordinate with Major Elliott's battalion in closing on the village on horseback from the opposite side while keeping the people from fleeing south before Custer's charge. The precise route of Thompson's command after leaving the high ground is unknown, but was seemingly circuitous and likely occupied several miles. Of all the squadrons, Thompson's had the longest distance to cover in their approach and consequently his soldiers were not altogether in position when the attack began, thereby leaving open a route of escape for many of the tribesmen fleeing the village.[22] It is likely that Thompson's men passed through parts of Sections 2, 3, 10, 11, 15 and

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[21]*New York* Sun, May 14, 1899; Kansas *City Star*, December 4, 1904; Clark Interview, October 22, 1910. Camp Papers, Lilly Library; Ben Clark map, 1897; Rush map; Sketch map enclosed in Clark to Mr. Burnett, July 7, 1913. Hist 129, Box 1. Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka; Lees, et al, "Archaeology of the Washita Battlefield,"pp. 18-19.

[22]*New York Sun*, May 14, 1899; Foley, "Walter Camp & Ben Clark," pp. 22-23; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 219 A map drawn by Captain Barnitz showing part of what must be

14 in making their approach.

7. **Myers's Attack Route**. Captain Edward Myers and Companies E and I moved down from the heights some three-quarters of a mile west and south of Custer's squadron. Myers crossed the Washita, passing east through the woods toward the village. On signal, Myers was to attack from the west while preventing the people from escaping in that direction. Rather than join in the attack, however, Myers played more of a containment role.[23] Myers possibly passed through parts of Sections 2, 3, 10, and 11 in his advance.

8. **Elliott's Attack Route**. Major Elliott's squadron of Companies G, H, and M departed the staging area passing northeast behind knolls and ridges, then south to the river, to gain a position east of the village on either side of the Washita "and then move up the stream to the attack at the proper time." Elliott's force began its assault from that direction when the engagement opened at dawn.[24] Presumably, Elliott's squadron traversed parts of Sections 2, 1, 6, and 7 in gaining its appointed place of attack.

9. **Sugar Loaf Butte**. This prominent landmark, a "very steep conical hill" named by Captain Barnitz, stands about one-half mile north of the village site, in the northwest quarter of Section 1.

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a speculative route for Thompson's approach is in ibid., p. 217.

[23]*Kansas City Star*, December 4, 1904; Foley, "Walter Camp & Ben Clark," p. 23; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 219.

[24]Foley, "Walter Camp & Ben Clark," p. 22; Camp Interview, Barnitz, December 5, 1910; Barnitz, *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, pp. 219-20, 223-25, and map, p. 217.

Following Custer's disposition of his troops, Major Elliott commanded the battalion that would strike the village from the east. From their vantage on Sugar Loaf, which they encountered as they led their troops into position, Barnitz and Elliott reconnoitered the village during the night of November 26-27. After descending the butte, the officers led their troops down a draw or "canyon" east of Sugar Loaf toward Black Kettle's lodges, preparatory to opening the assault at daybreak.[25]

10. **Custer's Knoll.** Custer ascended a knoll following the opening charge into the village. From this vantage, he monitored the action and made dispositions through his aides in accordance with his rank of commander. Presumably, he did not remain on the knoll for the duration of the engagement, but came and went as appropriate and from this point observed what was taking place around him. The position probably assumed more value as an observation post after Custer gained word that other Indian villages lay downstream. There are three knolls in the immediate area. The one from which Custer made his observations was also the one, according to Ben Clark both in 1904 and 1910, to which the slab marker stone originally erected near the river by Lieutenant Scott had been removed. Barde's ca. 1900 map shows the location of this "stone on mound" near the lower center of the northwest quarter of Section 12. This knoll, slightly northwest of the present overlook, was identified by the daughter of a local landowner as

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[25]Camp to Barnitz, ca. October-November, 1910, quoted in Barnitz to Thoburn, November 16, 1910; Camp Interview, Barnitz, December 5, 1910. Camp Papers, Lilly Library; Lees *et al*, *Archaeology of the Washita Battlefield*, p. 18. Clark took compass readings from a position on Custer's command knoll, and reported that Sugar Loaf was 15 degrees west of north. Camp Interview, Barnitz, December 5, 1910. See also, Barnitz's map in *Life in Custer's Cavalry*, p. 217.

being the site of Scott's relocated stone, and thus probably represents Custer's position. The north side of the knoll was torn away during construction of the adjoining railroad grade.[26]

11. **Hamilton Death Site.** Captain Hamilton and his squadron composed of Companies A and C rode on the left of Custer's line in the advance from the high ground northwest of the village. Hamilton personally rode close to Custer. Most accounts indicate that the captain was one of the first, if not *the* first, man killed in the assault, and that he was shot among the undergrowth bordering the stream.[27] Based on the apparent location of the channel in 1868, Hamilton likely fell in the northeast part of the northwest quarter of Section 12 just before or immediately after fording the stream during the charge into the village.

12. **Barnitz Rock Circle.** A circle of large stones designates the spot where Captain Barnitz, severely wounded in the fighting southeast of the village, dismounted and collapsed to wait for death. Instead, he was found and taken to obtain help from the doctors, who pronounced his wound mortal. Barnitz survived. The location of the rock circle, while not precisely known, is

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[26]Clark stated that Custer "rode straight to a little knoll that overlooks the village on the south, and from that point issued many of his orders. On this knoll stands the brown sandstone marker which Captain [sic] Scott of Fort Sill erected several years ago." *Kansas City Star*, December 4, 1904; Clark Interview, October 22, 1910. Camp Papers, Lilly Library; Ben Clark map, 1897 (showing presumed location of command knoll); Barde map, ca. 1900; Lees, et al, "Archaeology of the Washita Battlefield,"p. 19, citing Wesner interview, 1996. Barde's map indicated that Custer occupied a point beneath the high embankment in the northwest quarter of Section 12 as his headquarters.

[27]Barnitz to Camp, November 29, 1910; Godfrey, "Notes on Chapter XXII of Colonel Homer Wheeler's 'Buffalo Days.'" Ben Clark, however, perhaps mistakenly, placed Hamilton much closer to Barnitz's and Elliott's position. Ben Clark map, 1897; *Kansas City Star*, December 4, 1904.

believed to be in the southeast quarter of Section 12.[28] It is possible that the rocks have since been removed for use in building foundations for area farm houses and outbuildings.

13. **Cheyenne Stand Areas.** Ben Clark designated two places where the Indians made forceful stands against the soldiers. One was behind a large piece of fallen embankment opposite the northernmost part of the village loop, where the river had ground into the north bank and through time forced a large piece to collapse into the stream. Here a number of people held out against the troops until Cooke's sharpshooters finished their resistance. It was here that the Cheyenne woman killed her child and then herself. This action is believed to have occurred near the top-center of the northern half of Section 12. The other major stand area was evidently downstream, near where the loop of the river ended and the stream leveled out in its eastward course. Here a number of warriors took shelter in a ravine until the sharpshooters found them and killed them all. This action is believed to have taken place beneath the high embankment near the center of the northeast quarter of Section 12.[29]

14. **Magpie's Escape Route.** The Cheyenne youth, Magpie, along with some others, managed to flee the west part of the village during the attack, running west and south before troops saw them and fired at them. Wounded, Magpie continued toward a ridge to the south, and there engaged and shot a solitary soldier, perhaps Captain Barnitz, before eluding pursuit. The aged Magpie pointed out the place where he hid in the grass following the initial assault on the

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[28]Lees, et al, "Archaeology of the Washita Battlefield,"pp. 20-21.

[29]Ben Clark map, 1897; *Kansas City Star*, December 4, 1904. See also, Chapter 7, above.

village.[30] It is in the area of the southwest quarter of Section 12.

15. **Twin Knolls.** Many of the women and children trying to escape the army attack fled in the direction of these two buttes that rise from the prairie about one-half mile south of the village site. Here they encountered Captain Myers's squadron, which began to pursue them, "killing them without mercy," according to Clark. Clark brought Custer's attention to the matter, and "he ordered me to stop the slaughter, which I did." The captives were ushered back to the village and placed under guard in one or more tipis. From the top of the northernmost knoll, the girl Moving Behind witnessed much of the action around the village.[31] The knolls are located at the approximate center of the bottom half of Section 12, southwest of the present observation area.

16. **Route of Godfrey's Advance Downstream.** As he rounded up ponies from the village, Lieutenant Edward S. Godfrey led a party of soldiers across the Washita to its north bank, then headed east pursuing a group of dismounted Indians he had spotted. After several miles, Godfrey mounted a rise from which he could see tipis in the downriver camps. Warriors then confronted him, and the lieutenant began an organized withdrawal in which his small detachment skirmished with the advancing tribesmen until they fell back. Godfrey reported his sighting to Custer, telling him also of having heard firing on the south bank of the river, and that it might have come from

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[30]Rush map; Brill, *Conquest of the Southern Plains*, pp. 161-63, 303-05; Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, I, 606-07.

[31]*Kansas City Star*, December 4, 1904; Rush map; Foley, "Walter Camp & Ben Clark," p. 20; Rush map.

Major Elliott, who had earlier gone in that direction.[32] While his exact route remains unknown, Godfrey's movement extended for perhaps three miles downstream and northeast from the village, and likely passed through parts of Section 12, Township 13 North, Range 24 West, and Sections 6 and 5, Township 13 North, Range 23 West, and Section 32, Township 14 North, Range 23 West.

17. **Areas where Warriors from Downriver Villages Assembled.** Warriors from the several downriver camps of Cheyennes, Arapahos, Kiowas, and Comanches gradually occupied the hills on the north and south sides of the Washita, and eventually squads of troopers were thrown out to engage these tribesmen in long range shooting. On the north side of the stream, warriors appeared all along the crests of the distant hills and must have occupied appropriate parts of Sections 2, 1, and 6; some advanced as far as the ridges in Section 2 to capture the greatcoats and equipment left there by the soldiers before the attack. Custer later directed Lieutenant Berry to dislodge the Indians from this area.[33] Presumably, warriors also occupied parts of Sections 11 and 12, Township 13 North, Range 24 West, and Section 7, Township 13 North, Range 23 West, south of the river.

18. **Possible Skirmish Line Site Southeast of Village.** One area that configures well with known skirmishing that occurred as Custer's troops returned fire on the warriors from the

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[32]Godfrey, "Washita Battle," p. 492; Lees, et al, "Archaeology of the Washita Battlefield,"pp. 21-22.

[33]Ben Clark map, 1897; *New York Sun*, May 14, 1899; Foley, "Walter Camp & Ben Clark," p. 20.

downriver camps is that located in the southeast quadrant, northeast quarter, Section 12. Numerous expended Spencer cartridge cases were found during archeological examination of a ridge at that location, about 400-500 yards northeast of the present overlook.[34]

19. **Elliott's Departure Point**. At some point at mid-morning following the charge on the village, Major Elliott, accompanied by Sergeant Major Walter Kennedy, surveyed the country from a hill east of that used by Custer as a command post. From here, he spotted through his field glasses a number of Cheyenne men and boys hiding in the woods below, and called out for volunteers to join him in the pursuit of these people. Fifteen soldiers joined him and took up the chase downstream. The knoll on which Elliott and Kennedy stood was pointed out by Ben Clark in later years.[35] It is believed to be southeast of the command knoll in the northeast quarter of Section 12, just northeast of the present overlook.

20. **Route of Bell's Advance**. Following the departure of the regiment on the evening of November 26th, Lieutenant Bell continued on the trail with his two wagons and four ambulances. He forded the Washita several times in his advance. When the shooting got underway, Bell crossed his train to the north bank at a place approximately one and one-half miles upstream from the village and ascended the high ground where the troops had earlier waited to attack. By the time he reached the place where the overcoats had been left, the warriors from downstream

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[34] See Lees *et al*, *Archaeology of the Washita Battlefield*, pp. 48-49; Lees, "Archaeological Evidence," pp. 36-37, 39.

[35]Ben Clark map, 1897; *Kansas City Star*, December 4, 1904; Foley, "Walter Camp & Ben Clark," p. 20.

had appeared, and Bell and his escort were unable to pick up all of the garments and equipment, but raced his train forward through the cordon of Indians and down the slope to ford the stream and deliver new supplies of ammunition to the command.[36] In passing down the heights north of the river, Bell presumably maneuvered his train through the south half of Section 2 and the north half of Section 12 to gain the village area.

21. **Pony Kill Site**. Late in the day, Custer determined to kill as many as 875 of the Cheyenne ponies that had been rounded up. Not only would they delay his withdrawal from the proximity of the downriver villages if he took them with him, but they would remain an enticing prize for warriors who might follow the command. Moreover, the killing of the horses would further devastate the people and cripple their future mobility. With this in mind, the soldiers drove the animals to a point below a high bluff southeast of the village. The Osage scouts received some, while others were spared to serve as mounts for the women and children prisoners. The rest were "bunched against the steep bank," reported Clark, when four companies of cavalry shot them to death. "The hostiles who were gathered on the hills witnessed their destruction and with shrill cries derided the soldiers as cowards and dared them to fight."[37] The Pony Kill Site is in the

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[36]Bell to Camp, July 28, 1911. Box 1, Folder 19, Camp Papers, BYU; Barnitz to Joseph B. Thoburn, October 29, 1910. BA-1B Thoburn, 947, 86.01. Oklahoma History Society, Manuscripts Division; Godfrey interview, March 3, 1917. Box 3, Camp Papers, BYU (microfilm); Camp to Godfrey, November 13, 1919. Godfrey Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Lees *et al*, *Archaeology of the Washita Battlefield*, p. 21.

[37]Keim, *Sheridan's Troopers*, p. 144; Ben Clark map, 1897; Clark Interview, October 22, 1910. Camp Papers, Lilly Library ("Bluff where shot ponies right near and NE of Mr. W.T. Bonner's house. It rises at south edge of that piece of land on which village stood." "To bluff where horses shot 105 degrees W. Of N. Or 74 degrees W. Of S. To center of village."); *New York Sun*, May 14, 1899; Custer, *My Life on the Plains*, p. 249; Barde map, ca. 1900; Lees, et al,

northeast quarter of Section 12 near an abandoned railroad grade.

22. **Sergeant Major Kennedy's Death.** Sergeant Major Walter Kennedy rode with Major Elliott's volunteers downstream in pursuit of several warriors, women, and children. As the warriors drew away, Elliott's men followed. Kennedy, however, paused and began escorting the noncombatants back toward the village. Soon he was set upon by several Arapaho warriors from the downriver villages who approached from the river. As Kennedy tried to escape on his horse, the Arapahos overtook him, knocked him from his saddle, and killed him. The site of Kennedy's struggle with the Arapahos probably occurred in the northeast quarter of Section 7, perhaps one mile or so east of the village site and behind the present Forest Service offices.[38]

23. **Deaths of Blind Bear and Hawk.** Elliott's party crossed to the east side of Sergeant Major Creek where they overtook and killed these two warriors as they bravely drew the soldiers away from a group of women and children. The site of their deaths is in the northwest quarter of Section 8, Township 13 North, Range 23 West.[39]

"Archaeology of the Washita Battlefield,"pp. 48-49. Although many horse bones had previously been removed from the site, in 1933 there were still "bones of every description. Skulls, legs, vertebrae, every kind of bone known to a horse was present. . . ." Van Zandt, "Battle of the Washita, Revisited," p. 65.

[38]Rush map; Lees, *et al*, "Archaeology of the Washita Battlefield,"pp. 24-25. Barde's map, ca. 1900, contains the notation that Elliott's men were killed in the southeast quarter of Section 7, an unlikely place given the knowledge that these soldiers had crossed east of Sergeant Major Creek. It is possible that Barde meant the designated place to be that where Kennedy had been killed, an altogether feasible location.

[39]Rush map.

24. **Destruction of Major Elliott's Command.** Elliott and his fifteen cavalrymen continued the pursuit of the Indians they had initially targeted. In the course of their chase, the soldiers crossed a tributary since known as Sergeant Major Creek, killed Hawk and Blind Bear, then drove the people back behind the bank of the Washita and continued to shoot at them until a large force of warriors appeared from downstream. Other warriors blocked any retreat by the troops toward the village and forced Elliott's command into open terrain back from the Washita. Gradually more Indians surrounded the troops, and Elliott's men sought refuge in tall grass along the east side of Sergeant Major Creek, in a sharp bend of the stream as it angled east and north toward the Washita. (The configuration of Sergeant Major Creek has since been drastically changed in this area by its course having been diverted directly north into the Washita.) There the warriors moved ever closer, firing their weapons into the cluster of men who were by now shooting their own guns wildly at the tribesmen. Some of the Indians raced their horses through the cluster of soldiers. Finally, Elliott's party was overwhelmed by the warriors. Custer apparently knew nothing of the proceedings. Late in the day, desirous of extricating his command, he departed without knowing precisely what had happened to Elliott and his men. The scene of Elliott's moving encounter took place in Sections 7 and 8. Indian accounts indicate that the site is in the east edge of Section 7 or the west half of the northwest quarter of Section 8, adjoining on the east the former big bend of Sergeant Major Creek.[40]

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[40]Descriptions and/or plattings of the areas where the deaths of Elliott's party took place appear in Barde map, ca. 1900, sheet 2; Rush map; Lees, *et al*, "Archaeology of the Washita Battlefield,"pp. 24-25. See also, footnote 37, above. Ben Clark placed the site of Elliott's demise in the southeast quarter of Section 5, which is actually on the north side of the Washita. Foley, "Walter Camp & Ben Clark," p. 22. A Spencer cartridge casing was found on the east side of Sergeant Major Creek approximately one-quarter mile south of the site specified in the Indian accounts. Lees, *et al*, "Archeology of the Washita Battlefield," p. 48.

25. **Locations of Scott Monument.** The marker raised in 1891 by Lieutenant Hugh L. Scott to commemorate the Seventh Cavalry at the Washita originally stood near the river, apparently on the village site, which was then designated as "the battlefield." Presumably, the site of the marker was in the center of the north half of Section 12, and likely in the now long-vanished loop of the river where Black Kettle's village stood. Evidently, repeated flooding in the Washita bottom, together with roaming cattle, caused the monument of rocks to collapse, and some time after 1902 the principal slab of red sandstone was moved southeast to the knoll (lower part of the northeast quarter of Section 12) where Custer's command post had been located during the attack.[41] During the 1920s, this stone, increasingly weathered, was removed to the courthouse in Cheyenne to protect it from further deterioration.

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[41] *Kansas City Star*, December 4, 1904. A bold mark in the southeast part of the river loop on Ben Clark's map of 1897 possibly represents the location of Scott's monument.

Appendix A:

Army Casualties at the Washita

(Sources: "Special Report of Officers Killed at the Battle of the Washita, Indian Territory, November 27, 1868"; "Special Report of Enlisted Men Killed at the Battle of the Washita, Indian Territory, November 27, 1868"; "List of Wounded in the 7th U.S. Cavalry under command of Bt. Maj. Genl Custer, USA, at the Battle of the Washita, Indian Territory, on the 27th day of November, 1868"; Mangum, "Muster Roll." [For further specifics about the nature of the wounds listed below and their treatment, see the above documents.])

Killed

Elliott, Joel H.	Major	"Major Elliott was last seen pursuing some Indians about a mile and a half from the Indian Village in which the battle of the Washita was fought. There can be no doubt of his death. Body not recovered."
Hamilton, Louis M.	Captain	"Was killed in action at the battle of the Washita I T, Nov. 27, 1868. Ball entered about five inches below left nipple, and emerged near inferior angle of right scapula. Death was instantaneous."
Kennedy, Walter	Serg Major	"Body not recovered."

Cuddy, Charles	Private, B	"Ball entered about an inch above upper lip and a little to the left of nose, passed upwards and backwards and emerged behind and a little above left ear."
Mercer, Harry	Corporal, E	"Body not recovered."
McClernan, John	Private, E	"Body not recovered."
Christie, Thomas	Private, E	"Body not recovered."
Carrick, William	Corporal, H	"Body not recovered."
Clover, Eugene	Private, H	"Body not recovered."
Mulligan, William	Private, H	"Body not recovered."
George, John	Private, H	"Body not recovered."
Williams, James F.	Corporal, I	"Body not recovered."
Downey, Thomas	Private, I	"Body not recovered."

Vanousky, Erwin	Sergeant, M	"Body not recovered."
Fitzpatrick, Thomas	Farrier, M	"Body not recovered."
Lineback, Ferdinand	Private, M	"Body not recovered."
Myers, John	Private, M	"Body not recovered."
Myers, Carson D.J.	Private, M	"Body not recovered."
Sharpe, Cal	Private, M	"Body not recovered."
Stobascus, Frederick	Private, M	"Body not recovered."

Wounded

Barnitz, Albert	Captain	Bullet; Abdomen; Severe penetrating wound
Custer, Thomas W.	First Lieut.	Bullet; Right hand; Slight glance shot
March, Thomas J.	Sec. Lieut.	Arrow; Left hand; Slight flesh wound
Eastwood, William	Corporal, A	Bullet; Right elbow joint; Severe penetrating wound

Gale, Martini	Private, A	Bullet; Right arm; Slight flesh wound
Delaney, Augustus	Private, B	Bullet; Thorax; Severe penetrating wound
Zimmer, George	Private, D	Bullet; Left arm; Compound fracture
Klink, Frederick	Private, E	Bullet; Left arm; Slight flesh wound
Brown, William	Private, F	Bullet; Left arm; Slight flesh wound
Martin, August	Saddler, G	Bullet; Right forearm; Compound fracture
Morrison, Daniel	Private, G	Arrow; Right temple; Flesh wound
McCasey, Benjamin	Private, H	Arrow; Thorax; Severe penetrating wound of lung
Strahle, Conrad	Private, I	Bullet; Left ankle; Flesh wound
Morgan, Hugh	Private, I	Bullet; Right arm; Severe flesh wound
Murphy, John	Bugler, M	Arrow; Thorax; Severe flesh wound

Appendix B:

Known Village Fatalities at the Washita

(Compiled from information contained in Bent, *Life of George Bent*, p. 322 [in which Bent accounted for 13 men killed]; Bent to George E. Hyde, August 28, 1913 [in which Bent accounted for 11 men, 12 women, and 6 children killed]. George Bent Letters, Coe Collection, Yale University; Bent to George Bird Grinnell, October 12, 1913 [in which Bent accounted for 14 men, 12 women, and 5 children killed]. George Bird Grinnell Collection, MS.5, Folder 56.2, Southwest Museum, Los Angeles; Bent to Walter M. Camp, December 4, 1916 [in which Bent accounted for 13 men killed]. Camp Papers, Brigham Young University, Box 2, Folder 2 [microfilm]; and John L. Sipes Collection, 88.32, Box 15, File 216 [temp], Washita Massacre, Folder 1, and File 217 [temp], Washita Massacre, Folder 2, Oklahoma Historical Society. Some individuals listed below might have had two or more names, and some entries therefore might be duplicative. The precise number of Indians wounded at the Washita is unknown.)

Men Killed

Bad Man
Bear Tail
Bear Tongue
Big Horse
Bitter Man
Black Kettle
Blind Bear
Blue Horse
Buffalo Tongue
Cranky Man
Crazy
Fool Man
Hawk
Heap Timber (Lakota)
Lame Man (Arapaho) aka Lame Arapaho
Little Heart
Little Rock
Little Chief
Medicine Walker
Old retarded man cared for by Crazy
Pilaw (Mexican trader) (Mexican from Santa Fe)
Poor Black Elk
Red Teeth
Red Bird
Running Water

Sharp Belly
Single Coyote (Arapaho)
Standing Out aka Sun Bear
Statue
Tall Bear
Tall Hat (Lakota)
Tall Owl
Tall White Man
The Man that Hears the Wolf
Tobacco (Arapaho)
Unidentified Comanche
White Bear (Mexican captive)
White Beaver
Wolf Ear
Wolf Looking Back

Women killed

Medicine Woman Later
9 Cheyenne women
2 Lakota women

Children killed

6 unidentified children

Appendix C:

Other Known Village Occupants (Beyond Known Indian Fatalities)

(Adapted from Neil C. Mangum [comp.] "Inside Black Kettle's Village, Washita River, Nov. 27, 1868" [prepared from various published and manuscript sources]; lists in John L. Sipes, Jr., Collection, 88.32, Box 15, File 216 [temp], Washita Massacre, Folder 1, Oklahoma Historical Society; Warde, "Oral History Research for Washita Historical Site.")

Afraid of Beaver
Big Man
Bird Chief (Name provided by Colleen Cometsevah)
Black Eagle (Kiowa)
Black White Man (Name provided by Vernon Bull Coming)
Bobtail Bear
Clown
Corn Stalk Woman (female)
Crane
Crow Neck
Cut Arm, aka Walks Different (Name provided by Colleen Cometsevah)
Half Leg
Little Woman (Name provided by Alfrich Heap of Birds)
Little Woman Curious (Name provided by Colleen Cometsevah)
Little Beaver (age 12)
Magpie (wounded)
Mahwissa (sister of Black Kettle)
Man Riding on a Cloud (aka Touching the Sky)
Medicine Elk Pipe
Monasetah (female)
Mosaio (female, name provided by Colleen Cometsevah)
Moving Behind (female)
Packer
Pushing Bear
Red Shin
Red Bird (Name provided by Colleen Cometsevah)
Red Dress Woman (wife of Wolf Looking Back)
Roll Down
Roman Nose Thunder (wounded)
Scabby Man
She Wolf
Standing Bird (Name provided by Colleen Cometsevah)
Trailing the Enemy (Kiowa)
Walking Woman (Name provided by Lawrence Hart)

Walking Woman Tall Elk (Name provided by Colleen Cometsevah)
White Buffalo Woman
Wolf Belly Woman

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