

SHADOWS OF SAND CREEK: THE SAND CREEK MASSACRE AS A PIVOTAL
MOMENT IN THE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN WEST

By

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts in History

Middle Tennessee State University
May 2017

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ABSTRACT

The Sand Creek Massacre was a momentarily brief attack perpetrated by Colorado militiamen against Cheyenne and Arapaho villagers that proved horrific enough in its execution to produce a black eye on the history of the United States. What followed was a series of retaliatory raids by the Cheyenne and Arapaho against the frontier inhabitants of the Great Plains. In this thesis, I argue that Sand Creek represents a turning point in the history of the West as it brought about an end to the Borderland society that had existed before Sand Creek and laid the foundation for Federal Reconstruction in the region. I begin by providing a brief overview of the history of the Massacre and its subsequent aftermath. From there, I attempt to provide a context of the event in the preexisting historiography of Borderlands and Greater Reconstruction. I will then attempt to recommend how to incorporate this thesis into the current interpretive efforts of the National Park Service at the site of the Massacre. First, by providing an overview of the current interpretive efforts of the site and then concluding with recommendations for future efforts in order to widen both the scope and appreciation of the event for future visitors.

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CHAPTER I: SAND CREEK & ITS AFTERMATH IN A HISTORICAL TIMELINE

The attack on those encamped along the Sand Creek in southeastern Colorado on November 29, 1864 by Col. John M. Chivington and the 3rd Colorado Cavalry is an incredibly dark moment in American history. Some of the most gruesome acts of violence in recent recorded history were enacted, in the matter of a few hours, upon the Cheyenne and Arapaho inhabitants of the village. Even more despicable is the fact that the majority of these inhabitants were women, children, and elderly. Three separate investigations were launched concerning the Massacre – two by the military and one by a joint Congressional Committee – when news of the attack reached the East. By the time these three investigations reached their verdicts damning the actions of Chivington and his men, the Great Plains had erupted into warfare as the Cheyenne and Arapaho survivors allied themselves with the Sioux to exact revenge in a series of retaliatory raids. Among those who participated on the raids against settlements throughout the region was a survivor of the attack at Sand Creek, George Bent. Like many of his fellow Cheyenne and Arapaho survivors, Bent's world was rocked by the events of that November morning. However, it was a world that had been created by his family. His mother, Owl Woman, was the daughter of a Cheyenne chief who had welcomed George's father William to settle in their territory for the purposes of creating trading post. Bent's trading post would create a world that would enact drastic changes on Cheyenne society creating

a borderland society in which whites and Natives traded, cohabitated, and created a unique culture. By his early twenties, George Bent would see that culture he was born into come crashing down and be replaced by an entirely new reality that spread throughout the vast expanses of the West at the latter half of the nineteenth century.

George Bent came from a long line of exemplary gentlemen. His great-grandfather was believed to be involved in the Boston Tea Party and served with distinction as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Massachusetts Militia. His grandfather, also named Silas, moved to St. Louis shortly after the Louisiana Purchase and served as a judge on the Missouri Supreme Court. His uncle would accompany Commodore Matthew C. Perry on his expedition to Japan. But it was the actions of his uncle and his father, Charles and William, which would have the most profound impact on the world that George was born into in 1843. A quarter of a century before George's birth, Charles entered the fur trade at the age of seventeen for the Missouri Fur Company.¹ William, who was a great deal younger than his brother, would join Charles a decade later on the Upper Missouri.² However, the joy of the reunion was short lived. The brothers lost all of their trade goods to the Crow, the Missouri Fur Company was taken over by the American Fur Company, and their father passed away all within a year of their partnership.³ With a tidy inheritance from their esteemed progenitor, the brothers looked south to Santa Fe for a change in their fortune. The capital of the Spanish and then Mexican province of New Mexico, Santa Fe was located in the near Pueblo, Ute,

¹ Anne F. Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families: A New History of the North American West, 1800-1860* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 154.

² David Lavender, *Bent's Fort* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), 19.

³ George Bent and George E. Hyde, *Life of George Bent: Written from his Letters* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), 59.

Cheyenne, and Comanche territory. This made it an ideal location for the trade of agricultural and luxury craft products in addition to furs.⁴ The brothers brought in a handsome haul in trading for an amount worth \$200,000 back in St. Louis, the de facto trading capital of western America at the time. However, this was merely the beginning of the Bent's story in the West.

William soon recognized that to the north of Santa Fe, in the region of the Upper Arkansas River, lay a land with untapped potential for trade. The Great Plains was in a critical transitional period as both Euro-American and unfamiliar Native tribes had come into the region forcing conflict with long standing inhabitants of the environment as well as a strain on resources.⁵ William encountered one of these newly arrived tribes, the Cheyenne, in 1831 when he protected tribal members accused of horse stealing from the wrath of the powerful Comanche.⁶ In that moment, Bent made a critical ally in the region that would aid him later that year in the creation of a permanent trading center in the area. Advised by the Cheyenne chief Yellow Wolf, the Bents established a trading fort on the Great Plains near the hunting ground of not only his own tribe but also that of the Arapaho, Ute, Comanche, and Kiowa. Three years later, William would move the fort to its permanent location in the southeastern part of what would become the Colorado Territory. Over three decades, Bent would oversee the creation of a lucrative trading center as tribes in Colorado, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Wyoming, Nebraska, and Kansas gravitated to the fort. William's magnetic personality in addition to his diplomatic

⁴ For more information on Santa Fe's prominent place among early 19th century North American trading centers consult Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families*, 156.

⁵ For more on the fragile nature of the region consult Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, & the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1998).

⁶ Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 128-29.

arrangements elevated the site's status among the tribes despite the regions shifting dynamics. Meanwhile, Charles would marry in to a wealthy New Mexican family and would become the first Governor of New Mexico Territory following its acquisition by the United States government following the Mexican-American War. William also made an importance marriage alliance in 1835 when he married Owl Woman, the daughter of influential Cheyenne chief White Thunder. Together, the American brothers had established important familial connections with their Cheyenne and Mexican neighbors which made the family not only increasingly powerful in the West but also the founders of a unique borderlands culture in which Americans, Mexicans, and Indians were tightly connected through the web of trade that now flowed in and out of the Upper Arkansas. This society would flourish for almost two decades before the inflexible hand of the Federal Government came down upon the region in an effort to impose its will upon the peoples and the cultures of this borderland.

One of the strongest tools of the Federal Government was the treaty delegation. Designed not only to establish land and land rights, they also established the presence of the United States Government in areas where that had been previously American land in name only. At the beginning of the 1850s, United States treaty commissioners met with representatives from the Sioux, Crow, Assiniboine, Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara, Arapahoe, and Cheyenne tribes at Fort Laramie in Wyoming to make an arrangement. In return for amenities, the tribes agreed to allow the Americans to establish roads and trading posts throughout the Great Plains to serve the increasing number of travelers along the Oregon Trail following the 1849 California Gold Rush. The Treaty of Fort Laramie also assigned

“territories” to each of the tribes in order to reduce warfare along the Plains.⁷ The Cheyenne and the Arapaho were jointly granted lands east of the Rocky Mountains between the South and the Platte Rivers.⁸ This land was largely unpopulated at the time.⁹ However, the discovery of Gold in the area soon flooded the region with permanent settlers as towns such as Golden City, Russell Gulch, and Denver sprang up seemingly overnight. The population explosion led Colorado officials to conspire to oust the Cheyenne and Arapaho within the area.¹⁰ This was achieved with yet another treaty delegation. In 1861, the Treaty of Fort Wise placed the tribes onto a reservation one-thirteenth the size of their original holdings as outlined by the Treaty of Ft. Laramie.¹¹ Among the chiefs who signed the treaty was the Cheyenne chief, Black Kettle, who attempted to create a peaceful coexistence in an area that was steadily becoming more crowded and contentious.¹² However, certain tribal authorities refused to recognize the

⁷ “These Indians have never founded the title to their lands upon the treaty of 1851. They have looked upon that treaty as a mere acknowledgment of a previously existing right in themselves. The assignment of boundaries, they supposed, was merely to fix rights among the tribes -- to make certain what was uncertain before. It is true, that by said treaty they "recognized" the right of the United States to establish roads and military posts.” “Report to the President by the Indian Peace Commission, January 7, 1868,” in *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the Year 1868*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1868), 69.

⁸ Donald J. Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 121.

⁹ “I found everything in the Upper Country greatly changed, since I had left in 1853. At the time there had been very few whites in all that region, and practically all of these had been engaged in the Indian trade and fur business. The country did not even have a name in those days. It was spoken of vaguely as ‘the Upper Country,’ ‘the Upper Arkansas,’ or ‘the mountains.’” Bent and Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 111.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹¹ “Beginning at the mouth of the Sandy Fork of the Arkansas River and extending westward along the said river to the mouth of Purgatory River; thence along up the west bank of the Purgatory River to the northern boundary of the Territory of New Mexico; thence west along said boundary to a point where a line drawn due south from a point on the Arkansas River, five miles east of the mouth of the Huerfano River, would intersect said northern boundary of New Mexico; thence due north from that point on said boundary of the Sandy Fork to the place of the beginning.” “Treaty with the Arapaho and Cheyenne, 1861” (Treaty of Fort Wise). 12 Stat. 1163, Feb. 15, 1861. Ratified Aug. 6, 1861; proclaimed Dec. 5, 1861.

¹² Born between 1800 and 1810, Black Kettle spent the prime of his life as a Cheyenne warrior engaging in raids against the Kiowa, Utes, and Delaware. By the time of Sand Creek, Black Kettle was the principal

legitimacy of the Treaty as it had only been signed by a handful of chiefs.¹³ This led to a split within the tribe as some of the more militaristic members of Cheyenne society continued to live and hunt in their original territorial holdings and came into increased conflict with settlers. To further complicate matters, the fog of war spread over the Rocky Mountains. The manpower and resources of the Territory were stretched thin as the pro-Union Coloradans clashed with Confederate sympathizers based in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. In addition to actual engagements, rumors of a Confederate-Native Alliance spread throughout the settlements as paranoia against the tribes took hold of an already tense populous.¹⁴

In the spring of 1864, reports of cattle theft by the Cheyenne led to a punitive expedition by Colorado troops under the command of Col. John M. Chivington. A former Methodist minister who turned down a commission as a chaplain for a chance to fight for the Union, Chivington would become a war hero overnight following the Battle of Glorietta Pass in New Mexico in 1862.¹⁵ He quickly climbed the ranks and by 1864, was the commander

chief of the Southern Cheyenne and his role shifted from warrior to “peace chief.” For more on peace chief’s role in the Cheyenne community Henrietta Mann explains: “A peace chief assumed the role of a father to all members of the tribe. He was selected because of his goodness, his generosity, his bravery, his courage, his concern for the well being of others. He never acquired wealth for himself. He acquired wealth to give to those less fortunate. So that you got a father, a spiritual leader, a true servant of the people -- a person that had to live a morally upright life in every respect.”

¹³ Bent and Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 114.

¹⁴ While Bent certainly acknowledges designs by the Confederates to make a united effort to disrupt frontier settlements and overland routes, particularly by Capt. Albert Pike, no substantial allied campaign comes to fruition on the Great Plains. In an interview with a Joint Special Committee, then Indian Agent for the Upper Arkansas Indian Agency at Fort Wise Samuel Colley reaffirms Bent’s statement: “We supposed at that time the Indians were united against us that the whole country was going to be at war, and they would unite. Previous to this, however, some Sioux Indians had been laboring with the Cheyennes and Arapahos to get them to join them, but they disclaimed any idea of it.” “The Chivington Massacre” in *Report of the Joint Special Committee Appointed Under Resolution of March 3, 1865*, 93.

¹⁵ While the main part of the battle was raging at the Pass, Chivington and his men located the Confederate supply train at the base of a nearby canyon. After rappelling down the canyon walls, they overpowered the small contingent guarding the materials. The supplies were set on fire, the cannon was spiked, and a number of horses and mules were run off, forcing the Confederates on a long and humiliating retreat back

of the newly created military district of Colorado. Chivington believed that successfully dealing with the Cheyenne threat would take him to even further heights of power.¹⁶ The campaign resulted in a number of clashes between Indians and Coloradans, most notably the death of Chief Lean Bear during an incident in May near the Smoky Hill River.¹⁷ The death of Lean Bear incited retaliation raids across outlying settlements in the Territory. Particularly brutal was the attack on the Issac Van Wormer's ranch thirty miles on June 11th in which a ranch-hand, his wife, and their two young daughters were killed and mutilated. The bodies were brought into Denver and exposed to public view in order to rouse the people of Colorado to action against the Indians.¹⁸

The proximity of Van Wormer's ranch to Denver created a panic in the city. A rumor began to spread that the Indians would soon be advancing on the town and citizens

to San Antonio. Stan Hoig, *The Sand Creek Massacre* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), 19-20.

¹⁶ Richard White, *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 96.

¹⁷ According to Lt. George S. Eayre who commanded the Coloradans wrote to his superiors of the incident thusly: "I have the honor to inform you that on the 16th instant, when within 3 miles of the Smoky Hill, I was attacked by the Cheyenne Indians, about 400 strong, and after a persistent fight of seven and one-half hours succeeded in driving them from the field. They lost 3 chief and 25 warriors killed; the wounded I am unable to estimate. My own loss is 4 men killed and 3 wounded." *War of the Rebellion Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series I Vol. XXXIV, Part I, Chapter XLVI, 935. However, George Bent relates this story told to him by Wolf Chief who was present at the battle: "As soon as they saw us, the soldiers ran together and made a line. Lean Bear, a big friend of the whites, told us warriors to stay where we were so as not to frighten the soldiers, while he rode forward to shake hands with the officer and show his papers. He wore on his breast a medal President Lincoln had given him. When the chief was within only twenty or thirty yards of the line, the officer called out in a very large voice and the soldiers all opened fire on Lean Bear and the rest of us. Lean Bear fell off his horse right in front of the troops and Star, another Cheyenne, also fell off his horse. The soldiers then rode forward and shot Lean Bear and Star again as they lay helpless on the ground." Bent and Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 132.

¹⁸ Elmer R. Burkley, "The Site of the Murder of the Hungate Family by Indians in 1864," *Colorado Magazine*, Vol. XII No. 4 (July, 1935) 139-42. It should be noted, that an informant of Gov. Evans later came to the conclusion that the attacks were not a result of the ongoing conflict. Rather, an Arapaho who had a previous grudge against Van Wormer carried out the attacks. "Statement of Robert North, June 15, 1864," in *Report, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1864*, 228.

looted the ordnance storehouse in order to properly arm themselves for the showdown.¹⁹ Territorial Governor John Evans wrote to Secretary of War Edwin Staton requesting the authority to muster a militia for the defense of the city. Simultaneously, Evans sent out clear directions to those among the Cheyenne and Arapaho who were willing to pursue peace:

I direct that all friendly Indians keep away from those who are at war, and go to places of safety. Friendly Arapahos and Cheyennnes belonging on the Arkansas River will go to Major Colley, U.S. Indian Agent at Fort Lyon who will give them provisions, and show them a place of safety . . . The object of this is to prevent friendly Indians from being killed through mistake. None but those who intend to be friendly with the whites must come to these places. The families of those who have gone to with the whites must be kept from among the friendly Indians. The war on hostile Indians will be continued until they are all effectually subdued.²⁰

While the attack never came, the War Department authorized Evan to create a hundred-day volunteers' regiment christened the Colorado Third Volunteer Regiment. The ranks quickly swelled with volunteers eager to deal with the Cheyenne threat.²¹

While all of this was occurring, Major Edward W. Wynkoop, the twenty-six year old commander of Ft. Lyon to the southeast of Denver, received two Cheyenne visitors at the garrison. They claimed to represent over two thousand Cheyenne and Arapaho gathered on the Smoky Hill River where Lean Bear had been slain earlier in the spring. They wanted the Major to guide them from there to a place of safety. Wynkoop, despite premonitions that this might be a trap, traveled with a hundred soldiers to the headwaters

¹⁹ George Bird Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennnes* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), 151.

²⁰ *War of the Rebellion Official Records*, Series I, Vol. XLI, Part I, 964.

²¹ To get a sense of the typical volunteer in the 3rd Colorado we turn to George Bent: "Most of his force was made up of the Third Colorado Cavalry who were not real soldiers at all. This regiment had been hastily recruited from among the worst class of frontier whites – toughs, gamblers, and "bad-men" from Denver and the mining camps, rough miners, "bull-whackers," and so on. The men were not disciplined at all; their officers had been selected by the vote of the men and had no real control over the men. The men were not even in uniform, and they were all alike only in one thing: they were all eager to kill Indians." Bent and Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 148-49.

and proceeded to hold council with the chiefs, led by Black Kettle. After lengthy discussions, they agreed to accompany Wynkoop back to Ft. Lyon. From there they would head to Denver to meet with Gov. Evans in an attempt to prove their peaceful intentions and receive protection.²²

Black Kettle and other Cheyenne leaders were naturally nervous and their fears were justified when Wynkoop arrived in advance of the delegation to speak with John Evans and found the Governor opposed any such meeting. After a lengthy intercession by the Major, the Governor granted the Indians a meeting with him.²³ Among those present at the subsequent gathering was Col. Chivington. Chivington's speech to the chiefs that closed out the meeting showed the immense power he already wielded in the Territory:

I am not a big war chief but all the soldiers in this country are at my command. My rule of fighting white men or Indians is, to fight them until they lay down their arms and submit to military authority. You are nearer Major Wynkoop than any one else, and you can go to him when you are ready to do that.²⁴

The Cheyenne and Arapaho left the Denver meeting with this parameter for achieving the peace that Black Kettle and his fellow chiefs had aspired to create between the native people and the whites. The Cheyenne and Arapaho encamped at Sand Creek some forty miles northeast of Ft. Lyon, which they visited frequently through the rest of the fall as Wynkoop had all but gained their confidence. However, at the beginning of November he was relieved of his post as commander of the fort in favor of Major Scott J. Anthony.

²² For more on the meeting consult Hoig, *The Sand Creek Massacre*, 98-107.

²³ Evans, according to Wynkoop's later testimony, claimed it was not good policy to make peace with the Cheyenne and Arapaho until they had been properly reprimanded for the summer skirmishes. He claimed that peace would make the United States seem as though they were whipped. He also cited a scheduling conflict in his plans to visit the Ute agency (with whom the Coloradans had also been having conflict) before revealing what was probably his true motive for not wanting to meet with the peace delegation: the recent raising of the Third Colorado after repeated pleas to Washington on the necessity of such a force due to the hostility of the local natives. "The Chivington Massacre," 77.

²⁴ Senate Executive Documents, 39th Cong., 2nd sess., no. 26 ("Sand Creek Massacre"), 217.

Wynkoop's reassignment stemmed from complaints that the native people were in effect running things at the fort and Maj. Anthony was brought in to correct such notions.²⁵ However, after talking with the departing Wynkoop, Anthony begrudgingly accepted the same policies that had been adopted by his predecessor. Anthony's first order of business was to address the Indians in a consultation in which he promised that if they remained camped at Sand Creek during the winter, the men could hunt buffalo in the surrounding area while he waited for permission from his superiors to distribute them winter rations.²⁶ Therefore, most of the warriors in Black Kettle's band left in search of this staple resource of Cheyenne existence, while the rest of the band remained behind. Little did they know that the camp they were departing from was the target for a different group.

On the evening of November 27, Lt. Silas S. Soule spotted campfires while riding west of Ft. Lyon. Soule reported these fires to Anthony who had him investigate the source of these fires. The next morning, Lt. Soule found they were the campfires of Col. Chivington and the 700 members of the 3rd Colorado Cavalry as they advanced towards Ft. Lyon.²⁷ With their hundred-day enlistments set to expire, Chivington was under increased pressure to put the "Bloodless Third" to use after Gov. Evans had petitioned the War Department so long for their inherent need in the protection of the Territory. Therefore, faced with a growing dissatisfied group of volunteers as well as citizens of Denver at the inactivity of the group, Chivington set his men on a 200 mile march towards Ft. Lyon. Upon arriving, the commander of the District of Colorado ordered a

²⁵ *War of the Rebellion Official Records*, Series I, Vol. XLI, Part IV, 62.

²⁶ Hoig, *The Sand Creek Massacre* 125.

²⁷ "The Chivington Massacre" 27-28

strict guard placed on the fort allowing no one to enter or leave.²⁸ Anthony received Chivington warmly and placed the men inside Ft. Lyon at Chivington's disposal.²⁹ Some of the soldiers inside Ft. Lyon perceiving Chivington's intentions attempted to dissuade Chivington or Anthony from continuing their march, as the only Indians nearby were the ones encamped on Sand Creek. However, Chivington was absolutely determined in his efforts as one soldier recalled:

Colonel Chivington's reply [when informed of the promises Major Wynkoop had made] was that he believed it to be right or honourable to use any means under heaven to kill Indians that would kill women and children, and "damn any man that was in sympathy with Indians," and such men as Major Wynkoop and myself had better get out of the United States service.³⁰

Despite entreaties from a number of officers, a large contingent of troops set out from Ft. Lyon in the dead night. By now it was obvious that the destination of the midnight march was the encampment of Sand Creek which they reached just as the sun was rising up over the plains. In the midst of the encampment was Black Kettle's tipi, above which hung a large American flag. The flag represented the peaceful aims of the inhabitants, the majority of whom were women, children, or elderly. Black Kettle called out to the confused and panicked inhabitants of the encampment not to be afraid as Chivington's men charged towards the camp. The inhabitants were under the protection of the United States and they would not be harmed.³¹ While some of the Coloradans, particularly those under Lt. Soule's command, refused to participate; the majority proceeded to engage in heinous war crimes against the inhabitants of Sand Creek including the taking of scalps

²⁸ "Sand Creek Massacre," 51.

²⁹ "The Chivington Massacre," 69-70.

³⁰ "Sand Creek Massacre," 47.

³¹ Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, 177-78.

and genitals as war prizes as well as using small children as target practice.³² Little Bear, a Cheyenne who was in Black Kettle's camp the morning of the attack provides a horrific account of the atrocities:

I passed many women and children, dead and dying, lying in the creek bed. The soldiers had not scalped them yet, as they were busy chasing those that were yet alive. After the fight, I came back down to the creek and saw these dead bodies all cut up, and even the wounded scalped and slashed. I saw one old woman wandering about; her whole scalp had been taken off and the blood was running down into her eyes so that she could not see where to go.³³

In the matter of a few hours, Chivington and his men had destroyed the power and trust that leaders such as Black Kettle, who had advocated for peace between whites and Indians, worked so hard to create amongst their people.

Among the survivors of the Massacre was George Bent, who looked out upon the devastation and must have seen the borderlands world his father had built smoldering before his very eyes. George's path would take a very different turn from that of his father as instead of brokering a connection between whites and Natives, he would seek to revenge Sand Creek by bringing devastation to white settlements in the area. Cheyenne runners carried news of the events at Sand Creek as well as war pipes to other parties of Cheyenne and Arapaho as well as to the nearby Sioux. It would not be long before war parties from these three nations would plunge the Great Plains into what historian John D. McDermott coined a "circle of fire."³⁴

In the weeks following Sand Creek, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Sioux warriors assembled from across the region at Cherry Creek in order to plan a retaliatory attack.

³² "Massacre of the Cheyenne Indians" in *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of War*, 38 Cong., 2 sess., 17

³³ Bent and Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 154.

³⁴ John D. McDermott, *Circle of Fire: The Indian War of 1865* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2003).

Within the first few days of 1865, it was decided that the town of Julesburg in the northeastern tip of the territory would be the first to receive the avenger's wrath. Julesburg was a center for communication in the region as well as a crucial link in trails of westward migration and the alliance knew that a successful attack on the settlement would cripple the Territory.³⁵ The march to Julesburg during the first week of January was extremely systematic as among the thousand strong force, older warriors flanked all sides of the advancing column in order to prevent the younger braves from making a premature attack on any outlying ranches, thereby alerting the area's military force of their presence.³⁶ The defense of this region had been relegated to Company F of the 7th Iowa Volunteer Cavalry who were stationed at Fort Rankin less than a mile west of the town.³⁷ The Alliance leaders planned to draw the soldiers away from the garrison and then surround and annihilate them.³⁸ On January 7th, the decoy party was able to draw out the leader of the fort, Capt. Nicholas J. O'Brien, and some 38 soldiers and civilians towards a series of sandy bluffs.³⁹ Unlike the march up, the native people did not rein in some of the younger warriors and they sprung the trap entirely too early.⁴⁰ Realizing his precarious position, O'Brien ordered a hasty retreat back to the safety of the fort under

³⁵ For more on the importance and resources of Julesburg in early 1865, see Bent and Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 169.

³⁶ Grinell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, 182.

³⁷ Amongst the soldiers stationed at Fort Rankin was twenty-three year old Eugene F. Ware who was a Second Lieutenant in Company F. Ware was "gifted with great powers of observation and a felicitous pen" according to John D. McDermott and in 1908 he began work on his personal recollections of his time with the 7th Iowa which he would publish three years later. The work, Eugene F. Ware, *The Indian War of 1864* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), is an important resource to historians as it frankly depicts the reality of Plains life and warfare during this tumultuous period of history.

³⁸ Grinell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, 183.

³⁹ Gregory F. Michno. *Encyclopedia of Indian Wars: Western Battles and Skirmishes 1850-1890* (Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 2003), 162.

⁴⁰ According to Bent, this was a constant concern as young warriors were notorious for slipping off alone in hopes of advance plunder and honors. Bent and Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 170.

the cover of a howitzer located inside the stronghold. Seeing the commotion, the remaining inhabitants of Julesburg made a beeline for the safety of Ft. Rankin just before the bulk of the Native forces turned their attention on the now deserted burg in order to pillage it while a few of the braves remained near the fort to keep the soldiers from leaving it. The Indians remained there until late in the day, plundering the town of valuables. According to George Bent, their ponies were so heavily burdened with material that what would have been normally an overnight journey took three days to complete.⁴¹ While the poor execution of the trap had saved the force stationed at Ft. Rankin from total annihilation, there were those who did not escape the oncoming calamity of the avenging Allied forces. Of the thirty-eight soldiers garrisoned at the fortress, fourteen were killed in the fight in addition to four civilians.⁴²

This was not the only scene of conflict on the Plains that day, less than fifty miles from Julesburg seventy warriors attacked a wagon train headed east. A passenger was killed and the wagon driver was shot in the elbow, causing the wagon to crash. The rest of the passengers were able to make it to the nearby safety of the stagecoach crossing of Valley Station. They were more fortunate than two discharged soldiers riding in a wagon south of Julesburg who were attacked along the road. After killing the soldiers, the Cheyenne warriors found two scalps in the wagon that belonged to victims of Sand Creek. In revenge of the Massacre, they promptly cut the soldiers bodies into pieces.⁴³ As news of these events slowly leaked into Denver it became apparent that January 7, 1865 was just the beginning of these acts of vengeance for what Chivington and his men

⁴¹ Bent and Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 175.

⁴² *War of the Rebellion Official Records*, Series I, Vol. XLVIII, 23.

⁴³ Bent and Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 181-82.

had done on the dawn of that November attack at Sand Creek. The *Rocky Mountain News* which just months earlier had praised Chivington and his men as “cover[ing] themselves with glory” in eliminating the Cheyenne threat, now told tales of almost eight thousand “Comanches, Apaches, Kiowas, Shawnees, Ogallallahs, Pottawattamies, Blackfeet, and Cheyennes . . . led by Black Kettle who has obtained a furlough from down below” preparing to descend upon the city. In response to this amassed force, Robert B. Mitchell, the commander of the area, began to accumulate the troops of Camp Cottonwood, ninety-six miles east of Julesburg, for the purpose of a showdown with the Native forces.⁴⁴

In the eleven days it would take him to gather his forces, the Sioux and Cheyenne raided throughout the Northeast corner of the Territory. They burned the stage stations between Julesburg and Valley Station, putting a halt to all travel. In addition they attacked a number of local ranches. On the 16th, he set out with a force over six hundred troops, four mountain howitzers, and two Parrott guns to track down the source of these avenging war parties.⁴⁵ Three days later, at Cherry Creek, Mitchell’s forces found the recently abandoned allied campsite. After scouting parties failed to locate the Indians, Mitchell returned to the Platte, reaching Cottonwood on the 26th. The next day he employed an interesting tactic to strike at the tribes. Wiring all the posts between Fort Kearny and Denver, he instructed them to fire the grass at sundown. A strong wind blowing from the north helped stretch a three hundred mile long line of fire across the Plains. Mitchell reasoned this would deprive the attacker’s horses of grass to forage and

⁴⁴ Bent and Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 176.

⁴⁵ Ware, *The Indian War of 1864*, 329.

drive all the game out of the region, reducing their own sustenance.⁴⁶ While it was certainly a rather ingenious plan, it has gone down in history as more of a symbolic representation of the events of the past month rather than being effective in the field.⁴⁷

The Native inhabitants of the Cherry Creek campsite were not only already well out of range of Mitchell's fires but they were also scattered throughout the region. Only hours before Mitchell's scouts located the campsite, its inhabitants made a decision that would not only expand the conflict from the Colorado Territory into other parts of the Great Plains but also forever alter Southern Cheyenne history. Within the assembled Cheyenne, Lakota, and Arapaho forces, the overwhelming majority wanted to continue the conflict and planned to move their bands up north to the Powder River where they could not only avoid direct conflict with the large force of soldiers they correctly predicted would soon be sent out to confront them, but also to enlist the Northern Cheyenne and the Ogallala Sioux located there in their fight.⁴⁸ Black Kettle was not among this majority. Tired of the bloodshed that his people had both received and inflicted the past few months, he had been able to keep a large part of the Cheyenne from taking part in the revenge raids.⁴⁹ However, as he could not convince the Allied majority of the way of peace, he opted to move his band south of the Arkansas River.

While Black Kettle and his bands departed in the opposite direction, the remaining elements of the Southern Cheyenne re-tread their path of destruction from the

⁴⁶ McDermott, *Circle of Fire: The Indian War of 1865*, 28.

⁴⁷ Bent also relates the story of the fire in his recollections of the conflict but admits that "Although I was on the south of the Platte at the time and right in the way of such a fire, I did not see a sign of it, and never saw an Indian who knew anything about such a fire." Bent and Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 177.

⁴⁸ Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyenne*, 188.

⁴⁹ Bent and Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 176.

previous weeks and they honed in, yet again, on the town of Julesburg.⁵⁰ Capt. O'Brien, who had participated in Mitchell's ineffective campaign, was on his way back to Ft. Rankin on the morning of February 2nd when he saw smoke rising from Julesburg three miles away. O'Brien had left with ten soldiers and a howitzer to join Mitchell earlier, leaving the fortress with roughly twenty men to defend it and the town. The large contingent of Cheyenne, Sioux, and Arapaho who descended on the town were estimated to number in the thousands and they overran the town burning everything in sight.⁵¹ In effort to relieve the beleaguered troops and township, O'Brien decided to make a dash for the fort. At that exact moment, a northwest wind blew the smoke of the burning town in their path, so as to provide cover for their initial approach. When they came into sight of the warriors, O'Brien ordered the howitzer discharged which temporarily kept the enemy at bay and opened up a path to the fort. Taking advantage of the momentary disunion, the force made a beeline for Ft. Rankin as they discharged their weapons at the attackers and called upon a phantom army they hoped that the raiders would believe would be charging to their aid at any minute. The ruse was unsuccessful and the Indians regrouped in front of the fort to put a halt to O'Brien's oncoming force. Inside the fort Lt. John S. Brewer, who O'Brien had left in charge, saw the dilemma his commander was in and turned his own artillery inside the fort towards the Indians. Caught in the crossfire, the allied forces scattered and O'Brien and company were able reach the safety of the fortress.

While Ft. Rankin momentarily rejoiced at the safe arrival of the soldiers, their elation was short lived. They were still surrounded by Indians which left them helpless in

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ware, *The Indian War of 1864*, 365.

preventing the town of Julesburg from burning completely to the ground. By the evening all that remained of the town was smoldering embers and downed telegraph poles for miles. As the native peoples took the plunder across the Platte, they divided into three segments. A segment of the Cheyenne and Arapaho continued to raid ranches and settlements upriver, a large party of Sioux headed in the opposite direction for a similar purpose, but the largest segment camped overnight across the river from Ft. Rankin for a night of feasting and dancing in celebration of their victory. Eugene Ware described the scene from across the river in the fortification:

Circling around the fire, then separately stamping the ground and making gestures . . . and finally it was perfect pandemonium lit up with the wildfire of burning telegraph poles. We knew the bottled liquor headed destined for Denver were beginning to get in their work and a perfect orgy was ensuing.⁵²

As dawn broke, the inhabitants of the stronghold looked out to find that the revelers had vanished. They were on the march north to the Tongue and Powder River. Moving northwest, they encountered the first sign of life past Fort Rankin, the telegraph station of Mud Springs. The site was defended by a small segment of the 11th Ohio Cavalrymen and as advance Native scouts appeared near the town in front of the thousand strong besieging force, the telegraph operator frantically wired for aid from Fort Mitchell and Fort Laramie (fifty and a hundred miles northwest, respectively.) Relief troops were dispatched immediately. A grueling twelve hour ride brought Lt. William Ellsworth and additional members of the 11th Ohio from Ft. Mitchell to reinforce their besieged comrades. The commanding officer at Fort Laramie, Lt. Col. William O. Collins led one hundred and twenty men his post to Mud Springs in a daring two day march that

⁵² Ibid., 512-13.

would leave many of his troops frostbitten and drained.⁵³ However by mid-afternoon of the third day of the siege of Mud Springs was lifted after a particularly brutal four-hour skirmish and the Indians retreated from the battlefield.⁵⁴

While the Indians no longer inhabited Mud Springs, they were far from gone from the area. Collins, with the aid of fresh reinforcements that had recently arrived from Ft. Laramie, chose to go on the offensive and try and strike a knockout blow on the Indians. Following their trail, Collins located their main encampment at Rush Creek, twenty-three miles northeast of Mud Springs. Despite having been driven from the battlefield two days earlier, the allied forces remained resilient. When the Natives caught sight of Collins and his men, they engaged the soldiers in full force attempting to drive them from their encampment. The troops hastily dug in and prepared for the onslaught of Native warriors, which first came on the north side of the perimeter. Despite significantly outnumbering the soldiers, the first Native assault was repulsed. Next, a number of Cheyenne and Sioux occupied a knoll about four hundred yards from the dug-in troops which gave them the high ground on the soldier's position. Collins and his men tenaciously attempted to retake the position but they were unsuccessful.⁵⁵ Similarly, the Cheyenne and Sioux were unable to press their advantage and by the end of the day, the battle ended in a stalemate. By the next morning, the force that the Indians sent out was meant more to delay the troops than to overwhelm them while the rest of the camp continues their march north. By the time the fighting ceased later that day, the Native

⁵³ Collins' men would include segments of the 11th Ohio and 7th Iowa Cavalry.

⁵⁴ According to George Bent, the retreat took place simply because the Indians grew tired of the engagement.

⁵⁵ "In this foray, two troopers were killed and one of the corpses was later found with ninety-seven arrows protruding from it." Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyenne*, 230.

force was well on their way to their intended destination of the Powder River which they would reach without further incident by the end of the month.

It was now blatantly apparent that despite the tenacity of Collins and his men, there was a need for a much larger military force to dislodge the Cheyenne and the Sioux from the region especially with reports that the survivors of Sand Creek were determined to “clean the country” of whites once warmer weather came to the Plains.⁵⁶ As Collins prepared to leave the service following the end of his enlistment that spring, he made a final recommendation to his superiors concerning the avengers. He believed that the best way to punish the native people for their attacks that winter, the U.S. military would need to send troops into the heart of buffalo country and hold forts there until the conflict between the two sides ceased. He recommended that after this was done, the best place to relocate the troublesome Indians would be north of the Missouri River. Away from areas such as the Big Horn Mountains, Yellowstone country, and the sacred center of Sioux culture: The Black Hills. What followed that summer was the first mass undertaking of the United States Army to bring the Sioux and the Cheyenne to task for the “Circle of Fire” that had engulfed the Plains in the first few months of 1865.

While the Cheyenne won the initial conflicts of retaliation for the events at Sand Creek, they had opened the floodgates to a much larger conflict. From 1865 to 1890, the United States Army, fresh from their victories in the Civil War, waged systematic warfare against the tribes of the Great Plains. This warfare was designed to confine tribes to reservations under the initial control of the Interior Department. These reservations were meant to integrate Native Americans into larger American society by teaching them

⁵⁶ Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, 231.

to adapt agricultural, cultural, and religious practices that were oftentimes in direct conflict with their traditional values. Generals such as William T. Sherman and Phillip Sheridan who had perfected total warfare back East in campaigns through Georgia and the Shenandoah Valley, respectively, were responsible for the command of these troops. Soon militias and understaffed outposts were replaced by the full military power of the U.S. Army and they waged unceasing war on those who resisted integration. In bringing their methods and their commanders into the West, the Federal government was making an attempt to mold the region into their own graven image of an ideal Reconstructed West. In looking at the scholarship surrounding Sand Creek we are able to see both the triumphs as well as the pitfalls of this great Republican experiment and in doing so we might come to a closer understanding as to the legacy of this dark and tragic event which represents the climax of the transformation of the region from lucrative borderland trade empire to federally overseen territory.

CHAPTER II: THE HISTORICAL LEGACY OF SAND CREEK

The attack on Sand Creek and the subsequent retaliation of the Cheyenne brought forth the destruction of the wider world that George Bent's father had constructed when he first built his trading post in 1833. The society of this trading post, which provided a chance for Cheyenne and white culture to intermingle in the Upper Arkansas Valley, was now in the process of being molded in the image of the recently victorious Union that would attempt to impose the ideals of Reconstruction on the region by any means necessary. The borderland of George Bent's childhood would soon become a bordered land. The foundations of formalizing Western cultural practices were built in the summer of 1865 when Major General Grenville M. Dodge of the Department of the Missouri ordered Brigadier General Patrick E. Connor to dispatch over 1500 soldiers in a punitive expedition against the Sioux, Arapaho, and Cheyenne forces that had been responsible for the retaliatory raids following Sand Creek as chronicled in the first chapter. The expedition provides the basis for a transformation would spread throughout the American West in the subsequent years and decades. As a catalyst of that transformation, Sand Creek's has a crucial historical legacy to the region.

It is first necessary to understand borderland historiography so that we might better understand pre-Sand Creek Colorado's place within this ideology. From there, a look at the immediate reaction to the Massacre will provide a glance at just how long the event's importance has been contested. These will be provide the foundation for later interpretations presented by historians and scholars attempting to place Sand Creek in the greater context of the West, particularly in the midst of the Civil War. Finally, Sand

Creek will be presented as the beginning of Greater Reconstruction in the West in the hope of being incorporated into future interpretive efforts.

In attacking the peaceful inhabitants of Sand Creek, Chivington and his men were presenting a direct contrast to the role that William Bent had previously played for the Cheyenne and Arapaho in the area. The Sand Creek Massacre not only betrayed notions of a peaceful coexistence between Natives and whites but it placed an emphatic coda on such an era as the following decades would be characterized with bloodshed. William Bent's borderlands were forever changed. Borderlands historiography began with the work of Herbert Eugene Bolton. A protégé of Frederick Jackson Turner, Bolton disassociated himself from his mentor's infamous "Frontier" thesis by observing relations in the northern Spanish held territories for three centuries dating back to the 1500s. Bolton found the relations between native tribes and European newcomers not to be based upon one side's progress at the expense of the other. Rather, the relationship was one of accommodation as once foreign cultures began to intersect with each other economically, culturally, and even at times go as far as reaching familial levels. Recently, other historians have taken this idea and applied it to other geographical regions of the American West.¹ This has created a school of thought in Western history in which the borderland has become a byword for the oftentimes-complex cultural interactions that occurred in what had formerly been seen as a frontier ripe for conquest by progressive pioneers. However, as Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron point out in their 1999 essay "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in between in

¹ Prominent among them are: Georgry H. Nobels, *American Frontiers: Cultural Encounters and Continental Conquest*, Collin G. Calloway, *New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America*, and Anne F. Hyde *Empires, Nations, and Families*.

North American History,” this interpretive approach tends to ignore very prevalent factors in the history of the region.

[B]y stressing the persistence of cross-cultural mixing, social fluidity, and the creation of syncretic formations, new work on borderlands-frontiers has downplayed profound changes in favor of continuity. In such work, a timeless legacy of cultural continuity shrouds the rise and fall of empires, the struggles between emerging independent nation-states, and the fate of increasingly dependent indigenous and metis/mestizo peoples.²

While the rest of their essay tends to focus on the imperial and later nation-state rivalries that had a very real impact on The Great Lakes, the Lower Missouri Valley, and the Greater Rio Grande Basin, their premise can certainly be applied to Colorado. While as we have seen from the previous chapter, the world of Bent’s Fort certainly fit the borderland narrative, forces outside of the trading post culminating in the Sand Creek Massacre eventually broke it.

However, the breaking of the borderlands did not happen as suddenly as Chivington’s attack on the inhabitants of Sand Creek had been. The forces that would transform the region from borderlands to Reconstruction moved distinctly slower despite their pronounced systematic nature. In her work *Empires, Nations, and Families*, Anne F. Hyde indicates the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 was the historical pinpoint in which the influence of the United States Government was apparent on the fortunes of the Cheyenne that Bent and his subsequent family had immersed themselves into. In assigning bordered lands to each of the tribes of the Great Plains and establishing trading posts and forts to service American emigrants traveling west, the Government had begun the process of deconstructing this borderland society. The political fluidity of the tribes in the region as

² Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in between in North American History," *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 3 (1999):815.

Bent's Fort had created a space for Sioux, Cheyenne, Ute, and others to come together for the purpose of transactions. Now not only were these tribes scattered into "territories" throughout the region, they also began to frequent other forts for trading purposes. Fortresses such as Union, Riley, and Randall were erected in the years following the treaty and in conjunction with Forts Kearney and Laramie served as centers for trade for both American travelers and the tribes of their respective regions.

Sensing this shift, Bent became an Indian Agent on behalf of the Cheyenne and the Arapaho for the U.S. Government in 1859. Just a few months previous, the Pike's Peak Gold Rush had set off a wave of American emigration in what had previously been territory inhabited by the two tribes Bent had been employed to oversee. Bent's appointment by the superintendent of Indian Affairs was meant to "contain" the tribes until "suitable lands could be found and appropriated."³ Bent took his new position as an attempt to reconfigure the borderland society in order to fit the contemporary demands of the latest inhabitants of the region. Following in the footsteps of many Indian Agents of the time, Bent sought to teach the Cheyenne and Arapaho how to incorporate themselves into this evolving society by teaching them the necessities of European agricultural practice. Purchasing farming tools, seed, lumber, and other supplies at the latest incarnation of his fort, Bent set about implementing this idea to the tribes but he warned the Superintendent that "failure of food [and] the encircling encroachment of the white population" would only spark "a smoldering passion" amongst the tribes. Within five years those passions would erupt as a limitation of shared resources and wartime paranoia increasingly drew the line between the tribes and the Americans. Col. Chivington's attack

³ Hyde, *Life of George Bent: Written From His Letters*, 442.

on Black Kettle's encampment and the subsequent retaliatory raids shattered whatever hope for reconciliation between the two cultures existed and with that brought an end to borderland society William Bent had worked tirelessly to foster. His son George, who was eighteen at the time of the attack on Sand Creek, would come of age in an entirely new reality for the Plains, the Greater Reconstruction of the American West.

“Greater Reconstruction” as identified by historian Elliot West is a movement that took place in the West as well as in the South following the Civil War. Outlined in his work *The Last Indian War* depicting the events of the Nez Perce conflict, West describes it as a reaction to the twin crises of Westward expansion and Civil War in the mid-Nineteenth century. Built on the foundation of addressing a trio of issues brought about by these twin specters (the territorial limits of the country, the federal government's evolving roles, and whether citizenship should be extended to periphery elements of the population) Greater Reconstruction was meant to define the new nation as the sun went down on the Nineteenth century. However, as seen by the reaction to the Massacre of Eastern politicians and humanitarians who would be responsible for the imposition of Federal policies in the West, the foundations of Greater Reconstruction can be found in an event that occurred in the final months of this explosive conflict.

The immediate reaction of both East and West to Sand Creek can be best understood through the lens of both the crisis of Westward expansion and the Civil War in its place and time respectively. The aftermath of Sand Creek provided the opportunity for Greater Reconstruction to be enacted into this divisive region of the country. While we shall certainly visit this new reality momentarily, it is necessary to first pause at the moment of implosion in order to appreciate Sand Creek's instantaneous impact on the

area. When word of Sand Creek first reached Denver on December 7th it was in the form of a bulletin in the *Rocky Mountain News* with the headline “BIG INDIAN FIGHT.” The bulletin ended with an indentation stating: “Bully for the Colorado Boys!”⁴ The next day, the official report Chivington sent to Maj. Gen. Curtis was printed in full in edition to an editorial add-on at the end of the report; “The members of the Third, and First, and First New Mexico, who collectively ‘cleaned out’ the confederated savages on Sand Creek, have won themselves and their commanders, from Colonel down to corporal, the eternal gratitude of dwellers of these plains.”⁵ When the troops under Chivington’s command returned to Denver later that month, *Rocky Mountain News* historian Robert L. Perkin stated that the soldiers received a “big parade and a glorious homecoming. The ‘Bloodless Third’ now boasted that it was the ‘Bloody Third’, and the whole town smiled proudly and applauded the boast.”⁶ The Third had brought with them trophies of their attack at Sand Creek, Cheyenne scalps were shown off throughout the city leading the *News* editor to comment that “Cheyenne scalps are getting as thick here now as toads in Egypt. Everybody has got one, and is anxious to get another to send east.”

However, it was not just the scalps that were coming east, news of the events of Sand Creek also traveled across the Mississippi and the reaction was less than celebratory. Just a week after the Third arrived back in Denver, the Washington D.C. based *Evening Star* reported that one of the first items for consideration during the re-opening of Congress was “The affair at Fort Lyon in which Col. Chivington destroyed a

⁴ Hugh J. Reilly, *Frontier Newspapers and the Coverage of the Plains Indian Wars* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010), 21.

⁵ “THE INDIAN NEWS,” *Daily Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), December 8, 1864.

⁶ Robert L. Perkin, *1859-1959: The First Hundred Years* (New York: Doubleday, 1959), 276.

large Indian village and all its inhabitants.” The event had “excited considerable comment, and is to be made the subject of immediate investigation.”⁷ The *Rocky Mountain News*’ editors were outraged by this news and on December 30th made their outrage known to Eastern officials:

This talk of ‘friendly Indians’ and a ‘surrendered village’ will do to ‘tell to marines,’ but to us out here it is all bosh. The *confessed* murders of the Hungate family—a man and wife and their two little babies whose scalped and mutilated remains were seen by all our citizens—were ‘friendly Indians’ we suppose in the eyes of these ‘high officials’ . . . Possibly those scalps of white men, women and children *one of them fresh, not three days taken*, found drying in their lodges were taken in a *friendly*, playful manner; or possibly those Indian saddle-blankets trimmed with the scalps of white women, and with the braids and fringes of their hair, were kept simply as mementos of their owners’ high affection for the pale face. At any rate, these delicate and tasteful ornaments could not have been taken from the heads of the wives, sisters, or daughters of the these ‘high officials.’⁸

While the House of Representatives would condemn the attack on Sand Creek a few days later, a large number of Westerners contended that the Eastern officials were too out of touch with their frontier experience to pass judgment on them. Prominent among them was Eugene F. Ware, a poet, lawyer, and cabinet member for Theodore Roosevelt’s administration. Ware had served in the 7th Iowa Volunteer Cavalry, which had defended Julesburg in the retaliatory attack on the town by the Cheyenne following Sand Creek and in his memoirs he struck out against those who condemned Chivington and his men’s actions.⁹

⁷ “Indian Affairs,” *Evening Star*, Dec. 28, 1864.

⁸ “Documents on the Sand Creek Massacre,” PBS, , accessed March 05, 2017, <http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/resources/archives/four/sandcrk.htm>.

⁹ In a symposium meant to commemorate the sesquicentennial of the Sand Creek Massacre, Dr. Gary L. Roberts opened his speech “The Causes of the Sand Creek Massacre with Particular Emphasis on the Roles of Governor John Evans and Colonel John M. Chivington,” by speaking on the contrasting condemnation and justification of Sand Creek over the years “Those who justified Sand Creek” he stated “argued that the incident was a response to a bloody summer’s war and that the soldiers were decent, hardworking men protecting their families and neighbors so Sand Creek could not have been a Massacre.” Ware’s

“Among the humanitarians of Boston it was called ‘The Chivington Massacre,’ but there was never anything more deserved than that massacre. The only difficulty was that there were about fifteen hundred Indian warriors that didn’t get killed . . . [I]t was said that there were scalp dances in all the Cheyenne bands and that scalps [of Colorado settlers] were carried up into the Sioux villages.”¹⁰

Ware had reason to be critical of Easterners. H.L. Trefousse, the biographer of Benjamin F. Wade who was the head of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of War, which had published the 1865 report condemning the actions at Sand Creek, admitted that Wade’s condemnation was as equal part political as it was moral outrage. Governor Evans was a political enemy of Wade’s and the Radical Republican from Ohio used these yearly reports not only to investigate Union military operations but also to promote the Senator’s friends while criticizing his opponents.¹¹ That is not meant to say that all Easterner’s were outraged for less than sincere reasons about what had happened. Thomas Goodrich credits Eastern outrage over the events at Sand Creek with redirecting Abolitionist zeal for ending the enslavement of African-Americans towards campaigning for the humane treatment of Native Americans.¹² In March of 1865, a Congressional joint resolution created a special committee headed up by Wisconsin Senator James R. Doolittle tasked with looking into reforming the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Doolittle’s assessment of the Bureau entitled simply “Condition of the Indian Tribes,” included in its

justification of Sand Creek would be echoed in the latter half of the Twentieth century with the publication of Lt. Col. William R. Dunn’s “I Stand by Sand Creek: A Defense of Colonel John M. Chivington and the Third Colorado Cavalry.” Roberts would go on to condemn any rationalization for the actions committed at Sand Creek but his opening acknowledgement of past justification attempts depict that active participants in the massacre and a small handful of scholars had prominently propagated such ideology in the past.

¹⁰ Ware, *The Indian War of 1864*, 309.

¹¹ H.L. Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade: Radical Republican from Ohio* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1963), 252 & 270.

¹² Thomas Goodrich, *Scalp Dance: Indian Warfare on the High Plains, 1865-1879* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2002), 48.

appendix Doolittle's examination of former Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Agent Samuel G. Colley concerning the events of Sand Creek.¹³

While Americans on both sides of the aisle set out to alternatively justify or condemn Sand Creek, in the camps of the Cheyenne the Massacre's impact was unquestioned and instantaneous. From a native perspective, Sand Creek had in a matter of hours been responsible for the destruction of the political and territorial make-up of the Cheyenne and Arapaho. Douglas Scott and Jerome Greene attributed Sand Creek as the breaking point in the pre-existing power struggle between the southern branch of the Cheyenne's Peace Chiefs and their counterparts, the leaders of the Dog Soldier warrior society.¹⁴ As Chivington's men made short work of the inhabitants of Sand Creek, they also destroyed any political power that the Peace Chiefs such as Black Kettle held within the tribe. By the spring of 1865, the Southern Cheyenne had abandoned their homeland. Those that wanted to continue fighting the whites moved north with their cousins the Northern Cheyenne and their Sioux allies while those who desired peace moved south below the Arkansas River.¹⁵ It is therefore rather surprising that Charles M. Robinson III's history of 1876 Sioux War "A Good Year To Die," stresses in the opening pages that the Massacre had little to no bearing on the climax of the Indian Wars at Little Big Horn as the Southern and Northern Cheyenne split had created "two distinct nations."¹⁶ While another massacre at Washita and the Red River War plagued the Southern

¹³ *Condition of the Indian Tribes: Report of the Joint Special Committee Appointed Under Joint Resolution of March 3, 1865 With An Appendix* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1867) 26.

¹⁴ Jerome A. Greene and Douglas D. Scott, *Finding Sand Creek: History, Archeology, and the 1864 Massacre Site* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 22.

¹⁵ Berthrong, *The Fighting Cheyenne*, 188.

¹⁶ Charles Robinson III, *A Good Year to Die: The Story of the Great Sioux War* (New York City: Random House, 2012), 7.

Cheyenne following Sand Creek, Robinson considered the Northern Cheyenne to be at peace with the Federal Government. He later assesses Northern Cheyenne involvement in the battles of 1864-65 to be the result of the discovery of gold in Montana flooding the area with emigrants along the trails that ran through tribal territory. He makes no mention of the desire to avenge Sand Creek as a factor in this conflict. John D. McDermott directly contradicts this claim in stating that in the aftermath of Sand Creek, “The tribes planned vengeance, joining their tribesman in the south in one last united campaign. Northern and Southern Cheyennes, separated for several decades by circumstances of geography and trade, came together for one last time.”¹⁷ The cataclysmic nature of Sand Creek continues to reverberate to the descendants of the survivors of the Massacre. In speaking with Shawn Gillette the head interpreter for Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site, he stressed the importance that the event still carries in the culture of the Cheyenne: “In just a couple of hours, almost a quarter of their governing body was lost. The loss of (institutional) knowledge within the Cheyenne and Arapaho communities [is] still felt today.”¹⁸ In 2014, Rocky Mountain Public Broadcasting Service presented an hour long special on the Massacre, which included interviews with a number of local Cheyenne. “Sand Creek is not a dead history to the Cheyenne people.” One tribal member explained, “In a way we take it, as tribal people, the blood is still on the ground.” Another interviewee perhaps stated most eloquently in two sentences the legacy of the Massacre in both tribe’s culture and history: “The healing will go on forever. We will

¹⁷ McDermott, *Circle of Fire: The Indian War of 1865*, 14.

¹⁸ Shawn Gillette, interview with author February 2, 2017.

never forget Sand Creek.”¹⁹ The Cheyenne and Arapaho conducted their own history through the passing down of oral narratives of what happened at Sand Creek from the event’s survivors to their descendants. These traditions not only help preserve the memory of the Massacre for future generations of the tribe but also provide an excellent foundation for the National Park Service in how to effectively convey not only the horrors of Sand Creek to their visitors but also the greater historical importance of the event as recommended in this chapter.

In recent years, historians and scholars have sought to place the historical importance of Sand Creek in much larger contexts or narratives but they still only seem to scratch the surface of the Massacre’s legacy. A recent development in Sand Creek’s greater historical narrative is as a part of the Civil War. A number of works over the decades have been devoted to the West’s role in this defining conflict in American history.²⁰ In an interview from Ken Burn’s *The West* in 1996, Patricia Nelson Limerick perhaps best summarized the interconnection between the West and the Civil War:

“What was supposed to be this wonderful dream, that the West will unite the South and the North -- the West will be the kind of new child who brings this troubled marriage together. The [Civil War Era] carry a different lesson entirely, which is that this is the child that will blow up the marriage. That's the most consequential moment of the West for the nation. That's where there's no question about how central the West is to the whole story of the country.”²¹

¹⁹ The immense scale of the damage is echoed in the National Park Service film about the Massacre: *Sand Creek and the Civil War*. A Cheyenne descendent described it thusly: “There was at that time with the Cheyenne people, both the Northern and Southern Cheyenne, a council of forty-four chiefs and a significant number of those chiefs were killed at Sand Creek. It’s kinda like wiping out a third or maybe half of Congress.”

²⁰ Prominent among them are: Alvin M. Josephy Jr.’s *The Civil War in the American West*, Ray C. Colton’s *The Civil War in the Western Territories: Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah*, Adam Arenson’s *Civil War Wests: Testing the Limits of the United States* and Virginia Scharff’s *Empire and Liberty: The Civil War in the West*.

²¹ *The West*, “Death Runs Riot,” Episode 4, Directed by Stephen Ives. Written by Geoffrey C. Ward & Dayton Duncan. PBS, 1994.

Oftentimes though this interpretation has been confined to a few “key” events. For example: Bleeding Kansas as a prologue to a larger armed engagement, the societal breakdown of the Five Civilized Tribes in Indian Territory during the Civil War, or the tactical importance of relatively large Western battles such as Wilson’s Creek, Pea Ridge, and Glorieta Pass. However, until recently discussions of conflicts with Western tribes during the four years of the conflict have been assigned outlying roles or used to exacerbate the already violent climate of the time. In Burn’s film for example, Sand Creek is one of eight segments in the episode *Death Runs Riot* that also addresses Quantrill’s raid on Lawrence and the Mountain Meadows Massacre in addition to the aforementioned Bleeding Kansas and Battle of Glorieta Pass within its hour and a half runtime. Burns is not alone in this interpretation. Other historians have portrayed Sand Creek in this light, as an example of the sort of unrestrained brutality that ran rampant during this chaotic time in Western history. Donald J. Berthrong’s *The Southern Cheyennes* is one such prominent example as it contains a number of damning testimonials from witnesses of the event describing the barbarous nature in which the men under the Chivington’s command acted upon that dark November morning.²² The particular focus attributed to the actions of the soldiers: mutilating body parts and using children for target practice has echoed throughout history and has certainly helped to lessen the credibility over the years of those that would argue that such actions were justifiable. However, it does little to advance the idea that Sand Creek was a particularly crucial moment in the history of the West.

²² Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyennes*, 219-223.

Recently however, Sand Creek has found a more pertinent connection to the Civil War. It is seen as an integral part of the conflict despite its far-flung location from other more commonly ascribed battlefields at Antietam or Gettysburg. This interpretation that has gained such prominence recently, that the National Park Service Site has adopted it. The connection is best defined by an Op-Ed written in the *New York Times* in 2015 by prominent historians Ari Kelman and Boyd Cothran: “These two conflicts [The Civil and Indian Wars], long segregated in history and memory, were in fact intertwined.”²³ Kelman and Cothran’s article focused not only on the Western battlefields and sites of conflict with native tribes but also how they were interconnected with the policies of liberty promoted by the Union leaders back East. This idea was taken up by the National Park Service site and will be incorporated into their forthcoming interpretive efforts. As stated by Park Director Alexa Roberts: “What we really emphasize and continue to is the role of Sand Creek as an element of the Civil War. The Civil War’s influence on Sand Creek happening and the Sand Creek’s impact on what was happening in the Civil War.” Recently the Post Modern Company, a video production service based in Denver, partnered with the National Park Service to create a film entitled *The film begins with the creation of Bent’s Fort and concludes with the Annual Spiritual Healing Run-Walk that takes places each November in which participants run from the site of the Massacre to the front steps of the State Capitol in Denver. Retracing the route Chivington and his men took on their return home from the “big Indian fight.”* The film is interspersed with interviews with a number of prominent historians and tribal members many of whom

²³ Boyd Cothran and Ari Kelman, "How the Civil War Became the Indian Wars," *The New York Times*, May 25, 2015.

appear within the pages or footnotes of this work. However, the narrative that it tells has trouble deviating from the narrative of the former part of the title and relating it to the latter half. This shows just how tricky pinning Sand Creek's legacy on this cataclysmic event can actually be. Countless books and articles have been devoted to linking a variety of subjects to these defining four years of American history from baseball to medicine to literature to the "Southern Belle."²⁴ Therefore, like any other historical event that occurred from 1861-65, it is difficult for the Sand Creek Massacre to properly be expressed in its incredible significance to the West if it is confined merely within those four years. It is instead necessary to view Sand Creek through the lens of Greater Reconstruction in order to fully appreciate its historical legacy.

Though West draws the majority of focus on events in the Northwest in the 1870s, he argues that the East-West divide that ran parallel to the traditional North-South rift decades earlier was all but ended by a seminal moment in the midst of the Civil War. As Kelman and Cothran set to disprove in their New York Times article, West admitted that at first glance, the first few years of the war seemed to further the divide of these "two axes."²⁵ The East was engulfed in a war of disunion while the West was engaged in conflicts of consolidation. Military strikes against the Sioux in Minnesota, the Shoshones in Idaho, and the Navajos in Arizona flexed the power of the United States military out West while their Eastern counterparts stalled in Virginia. Such successes led Westerners to attribute the area as a representation of an exciting and bold future for the country

²⁴ Karen Abbott, "The Civil War and the Southern Belle," *The New York Times*, August 18, 2014. George B. Kirsch, *Baseball in Blue and Gray: the National Pastime during the Civil War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013). Randall Fuller, *From Battlefields Rising: How the Civil War Transformed American Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). Ira M. Rutkow, *Bleeding Blue and Gray: Civil War Surgery and the Evolution of American Medicine* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2015).

²⁵ Elliot West, *The Last Indian War: The Nez Perce Story* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) 96.

while many a Northerner bit his proverbial nails over the very survival of that nation. However, one battle brought these two ideologies on a collision course with each other. To West, as with many historians of the war, Gettysburg was the moment in which everything changed. Those three days in July of 1863 preserved the Union and brought a halt to the military gains of the South. The Union's subsequent military advances following Gettysburg served only to confirm that a newly united East could embrace the optimistic viewpoint of the Western brethren and that region beyond the Mississippi would be the stage upon which these dreams would be enacted. West includes Sand Creek in that list of military successes of the Western army as the fighting that followed the massacre "broke the power of the tribes that had dominated the central Great Plains,"²⁶ these success would make for fertile ground as the Eastern Government began to enact Greater Reconstruction upon all the inhabitants of the West.

The Civil War had a number of consequences both East and West but one that untied the two together was the fact that military successes of the Union army emboldened the Federal Government to attain power over the American populace that had never been approached before. In the words of author Richard Bense, reuniting the country gave birth to the "Yankee Leviathan"²⁷ in which the government attempted to extend its control through a variety of activities and this was especially true in the West. "During the late nineteenth century, the West was the kindergarten of the American state," wrote Richard White "a place where federal government nurtured its power and produced its bureaucracies . . . The federal government controlled most of the West's

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Richard Franklin Bense, *Yankee Leviathan: the Origins of Central State Authority in America, 1859-1877* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

lands and an important, if not particularly efficient, bureaucracy disposed of them. With their lives touched by institutions like the agency that became the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the US Geological Survey, and—late in the century—the emerging Forest Service, westerners, more than inhabitants of any other section, depended on the presence of the federal government.”²⁸

In order to properly support this Greater Reconstruction, the United States not only relied on the Westerners spirit to create their bold and exciting vision of the future, they also relied on martial power. This came in the form of an increased military presence in the West.

In the years after the Civil War, federal officials contemplated the problem of demilitarization. Over one million Union soldiers had to be mustered out or redeployed. Thousands of troops remained in the South to support Reconstruction. Thousands more were sent West. Set against that backdrop, the project of continental expansion fostered sectional reconciliation. Northerners and Southerners agreed on little at the time except that the Army should pacify Western tribes. Even as they fought over the proper role for the federal government, the rights of the states, and the prerogatives of citizenship, many Americans found rare common ground on the subject of Manifest Destiny.²⁹

While the deployment of large numbers of Federal troops to the West in order to pacify the tribes was agreeable to both North and South it did not necessarily translate to immediate success.

When the Plains exploded into warfare in the months following Sand Creek, Richard White described Federal pursuit of avenging war parties as disastrous fiascoes that displayed the futility of Plains Warfare during the Civil War. White does not credit

²⁸ Richard White, "Born Modern: An Overview of the West," *History Now*, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, accessed March 11, 2017, <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/development-west/essays/born-modern-overview-west>.

²⁹ Cothran and Kelman, "How the Civil War Became the Indian Wars."

Sand Creek and its aftermath for the changes in strategy that the U.S. Army underwent in the aftermath of the Civil War with regards to Plains warfare. That distinction was given to the Fetterman Fight over two years after the events of Sand Creek. In 1866, Capt. William Fetterman and 80 of his men were lured into an ambush outside of Fort Phil Kearney by a group of Arapahos, Cheyennes and Lakota. There were no survivors. It was the Army's worst defeat on the Plains to date. White reasons that the event "humiliated" the Army and led the generals to pursue total warfare on the Plains. I believe that he goes a bit too far forward in time in his assessment that the Fetterman Massacre was the true turning point for full-scale military mobilization in the West. In his description of the futile response of the United States military to the avenging Cheyenne and Lakota, White describes tactical blunders that would have almost certainly gained the attention of U.S. military leaders of the time. The Fetterman Massacre one year after the avenging raids for Sand Creek is a convenient and albeit iconic accentuation of these problems but they truly come to light and the attention of the military in early 1865. In closing the previous chapter with William O. Collins having left the service following the engagement at Rush Creek, he was making recommendations on how to engage the avenging tribes to his superior Grenville M. Dodge. Dodge had previously served in the corps of William T. Sherman during the Battle of Atlanta and therefore was quite experienced in the methods of total warfare Sherman had employed to bring the South to its knees. For Dodge to fail to pass on these experiences to his subordinates as they carried out the Powder Ridge Expedition in the Summer of 1865 and for it to take the disaster of Fetterman an entire year later before Dodge and his own superiors fully caught on to what was necessary to subdue the Plains tribes is rather far fetched to say the least.

While the Federal Government's evolving role and the territorial limits of the country were linked hand in hand with the evolution of the military in the West, Greater Reconstruction still had one key element that has gone largely un-discussed up to this point: whether citizenship should be extended to periphery elements of the population. While the answer to this question can easily be found in programs in the Reconstructed South that extended a number of liberties including citizenship to newly emancipated African-Americans, in the West the Federal Government found this to be a trickier task. Military force alone would not be enough to bring Native Americans into the fold of this new Union as many tribes resisted such integration with armed conflict. Therefore, the citizenship of Native Americans became a moral question for Eastern policy makers.

The foundations of the moral dilemma of what to make of the Plains tribes and their place in the renewed Union can be found in the response of Easterners to the events of Sand Creek. The United States Congress Joint Committee on the Conduct of War's summation of the Massacre is as much a damning indictment of Chivington and his men for their actions as it is an expression of the moral outrage a number of Easterners felt as reports of the atrocities of Sand Creek spread throughout the country.

[The] committee can hardly find fitting terms to describe [Chivington's] conduct. Wearing the uniform of the United States, which should be the emblem of justice and humanity; holding the important position of commander of a military district, and therefore having the honor of the government to that extent in his keeping, 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. Having full knowledge of their friendly character, having himself been instrumental to some extent in placing them in their position of fancied security, he took advantage of their in-apprehension and defenceless condition to gratify the worst passions that ever cursed the heart of man.³⁰

³⁰ *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War at the Second Session Thirty-eighth Congress.* United States. Congress.

While there had certainly been previously prominent members of the Eastern political, societal, and religious sets that had bemoaned the fate of the Indian against the march of civilization, Sand Creek was the beginning of a turning point in this aspect of humanitarianism. Emboldened by the successes of Abolitionism, a number of moral reformers began to turn their attention towards Indian country. In her essay “Still Pictures, Moving Stories: Reconstruction Comes to Indian Country,” Martha A. Sandweiss points out that while for many the West was seen as a place where national reconciliation could begin, on the Plains the shape the new nation was taking was often quite unclear. It would take the efforts of both a moral crusader and powerful policy maker to make the West the foundation of a new and united America for natives and whites alike.

One of these men who tried to shape the West in this new and bold Reconstructed image was Samuel F. Tappan. Tappan had been a part of the Pike’s Peak Gold Rush that had revealed the cracks in William Bent’s borderland society. Tappan would head up one of the first regiments of Colorado volunteers for the Union war effort in the months following the outbreak of the war. His distinguished military service in the Territory coupled with an idealistic past as a Abolitionist made him a natural choice for his appointment as the chief military investigator into the Sand Creek Massacre. When one of the key anti-Chivington witnesses to the Massacre, Capt. Silas Soule, was murdered in the streets of Denver following his testimony, Tappan spoke of the great moral failing that existed throughout the country that had lead to such a crime: The barbarism of

slavery culminated in the assassination of Mr. Lincoln, the barbarism of Sand Creek has culminated in the assassination of Capt. Soule.”³¹

The report that Tappan delivered on Sand Creek would have incredibly far reaching consequences on the efforts of Greater Reconstruction on the Great Plains. It inspired a Congressional study into the conditions of the Indian tribes, which surmised that the western Indian was in a desolate condition due in large part to white aggravation. The study recommended the reservation system as the best solution into these problems, which was undertaken by the Peace Commission on which Tappan was tapped to serve. It is therefore rather ironic that in order for Tappan and the Peace Commission to enact this reservation system to preserve the tribes it was first necessary to bring them to heel by the military force that was freshly unleashed in the West as a part of Greater Reconstruction.

It is natural for historians to link Sand Creek to the Civil War alone due to its timeframe and as a representation of the chaos the period incident in the West. However, this limited scope fails to grasp the importance of Sand Creek. No event more clearly demonstrates not only the clear end of the borderlands ideal that had existed in the region, but also the beginnings of Greater Reconstruction that would attempt to bring the West into the newly defined Union. Like many events of extreme violence in the West it is an expression of a number of converging ideologies and movements that are expressed through moments of unimaginable carnage. Sand Creek and its immediate aftermath impeccably represent the beginning of the sweeping changes in cultural ideology and regional policy of Greater Reconstruction. Therefore, it is necessary not only to

³¹ Ari Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling Over the Memory of Sand Creek* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013) 176.

incorporate these aspects of Sand Creek's historical legacy into future interpretive efforts but also to place them at the forefront due to its unique heritage. However, in order to promote this interpretive viewpoint it is first necessary to take a moment to understand the current interpretive structure and why this innovation into Sand Creek's historic importance in the region is so urgently needed in future efforts.

CHAPTER III: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SITES OF EXTREME VIOLENCE IN THE WEST AND A HISTORY OF THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING THE SITE OF SAND CREEK

Sand Creek was more than an episode of extreme violence in a region and time period that was characterized by such actions. Rather, as I argued in the previous chapter, it was a turning point in the transition of the southern Great Plains from Borderland to an area of Greater Reconstruction. In choosing to incorporate this idea into the ongoing interpretive efforts of the National Park Service who oversee the site where the Massacre occurred, the cultural landscape of Sand Creek can take on a much greater significance. In addition to the inclusion of a tangible but powerful marker of the battle, a strong interpretive program has the potential to produce a greater understanding to visitors of the significance of the event in Western history.

Opened on April 27, 2007 as the 391st unit of the National Park Service, the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site's current presentation and interpretive models are rather minimalistic in light of its crucial importance to the history of the region. Located just outside of Eads, Colorado the site is one of the least ostentatious in the National Park system. Its visitors center is a double-wide trailer that doubles as an office space and its most prominent feature is a one-mile trail on a bluff that overlooks site of the Massacre with a gate preventing further visitor access. It has remained largely untouched in the first decade since its inception. Some find the minimalistic approach to the site to be its greatest strength. Writing for the L.A. Times in 2016, journalist Thomas Curwen surmised that "Sand Creek is mostly a place of imagination where visitors are asked to

consider a time in America before sea to shining sea, a time when mean circumstances or greed drove people to the gold fields and cities of the West and to a hatred of anything different from themselves.” He concludes his overview of the site by claiming that “[I]n emptiness, Sand Creek is most eloquent.”¹

However, Curwen’s statement runs the risk of embracing “the myth of emptiness.” Author Wendy Harding describes the dangers of such an approach:

“Places once thought of as empty offer the tangible traces of and testimonies of foregone times. They may also contain what Kent C. Ryden calls an ‘invisible landscape of meanings, memories, and associations’ perceived only by insiders and imperceptible to the passing traveler . . . If figuring landscapes as a means of cultivating modes of seeing, designating places as empty is, by contrast, a way to foster modes of unseeing.”²

Therefore, in providing visitors with even the most minimal of tangible markers or structures, there is an opportunity to expound upon the eloquence and add to the sites current interpretive efforts. In a 1996 article, the late anthropologist Keith Basso wrote:

What is remembered about a particular place— including, prominently, verbal and visual accounts of what has transpired there— guides and constrains how it will be imagined by delimiting a field of workable possibilities. These possibilities are then exploited by acts of conjecture and speculation which build upon them and go beyond them to create possibilities of a new and original sort, thus producing a fresh and expanded picture of how things might have been... Essentially, then, instances of place-making consist in an adventitious fleshing out of historical material that culminates in a posited state of affairs.³

Sites, as we shall see by later examples, that have chosen to approach their interpretation of a field of conflict through multiple “verbal and visual accounts,” not only provide a

¹ Thomas Curwen, "In Its Emptiness, Sand Creek Speaks Volumes," *GazetteXtra*, August 12, 2016, , accessed November 17, 2016, http://www.gazettextra.com/20160812/in_its_emptiness_sand_creek_speaks_volumes.

² Wendy Harding, *The Myth of Emptiness and the New American Literature of Place* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014), 10.

³ Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 5.

chance for their locations to gain a more significant standing in the pantheon of popular American historical memory but also allows for a much deeper connection with the events themselves by the visitors.

In choosing to adopt a minimalistic approach Sand Creek is not alone, other sites of explosive violence in the nineteenth century West have chosen this method though it has not always been particularly well received by the public. Two prominent examples can be found in at the site of the Wounded Knee and Mountain Meadows Massacres in South Dakota and Utah respectively. Wounded Knee was the site of an attack by US Army on a band of Lakotas under the leadership of Chief Big Foot. The group had fled the Standing Rock Reservation following the murder of their leader Sitting Bull by reservation policemen. They looked to join up with the prominent Sioux leader Red Cloud at the Pine River Reservation to the south when they were intercepted by a detachment of the US 7th Cavalry. The morning of December 29th, the commander of the detachment ordered his troops to remove any weapons that were in the possession of the band members. According to reports, a Lakota by the name of Black Coyote who was deaf and didn't speak English misunderstood the intentions of the soldiers and refused to give up his rifle. A scuffle ensued and the weapon was discharged. The soldiers opened fire upon the assembled band and in less than an hour at least one hundred and fifty Lakota had been killed and a third of that number were wounded. A large number of the dead were deposited into a mass grave three days after the massacre by civilians hired by the military.⁴ In 1903, Lakota descendants erected a monument at the gravesite. The memorial lists many of those who died at Wounded Knee along with an inscription:

⁴ A three-day blizzard had prevented earlier burial leaving the bodies frozen in haunting positions once the

This monument is erected by surviving relatives and other Ogalala and Cheyenne River Sioux Indians in memory of the Chief Big Foot massacre December 29, 1890. Col. Forsyth in command of US troops. Big Foot was a great chief of the Sioux Indians. He often said, 'I will stand in peace till my last day comes.' He did many good and brave deeds for the white man and the red man. Many innocent women and children who knew no wrong died here."⁵

Visitors can still see the memorial at the site today. However, with the exception of a historical marker describing the event that has not been updated for over twenty years and a “rough looking” visitors center that has been reported to be inaccessible at times, there is a lack of detailed interpretation of the event at the site.⁶ There are significant battlefield commemorative efforts, particularly the Chief Bigfoot Memorial Riders who over the course of a week retrace the approximately one hundred and fifty mile route the leader and his band took before arriving at the site on the date of the massacre. This type of commemorative effort creates what Helen Alexandra Keremedjiev’s calls a “sacred landscape” in which the social symbolism of the site is reinforced and passed down annually to new members through the practices of the pilgrimage “in order to maintain its extraordinary cultural significance.”⁷ However, a lack of national awareness for the event restricts the experience to a select few. While for certain ceremonies of tribal commemoration this is understandable, both the website and the Facebook page of the Chief Bigfoot Band Memorial Ride are continuing to invite participants and volunteers

gravediggers arrived at the site.

⁵ "Wounded Knee Monument Inscription," Wounded Knee Museum Blog, accessed March 11, 2017, <http://blog.woundedkneemuseum.org/p/monument-inscription.html>.

⁶ Harmony S. “Wounded Knee Visitor ‘s Center,” *Yelp Inc.*, 19 Aug. 2016. Web. 25 Jan. 2017.

⁷ Helen Alexandra Keremedjiev, " The Ethnography of On-Site Interpretation and Commemoration Practices: Place-Based Cultural Heritages at the Bear Paw, Big Hole, Little Bighorn, and Rosebud Battlefields" (2013). *Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers*, 41.

from all walks of life to participate in the 2015 commemorative ride.⁸ So while for those that attend, this momentous commemoration transforms the site during that week into a place of sacred symbolism; During the other fifty-one weeks out of the year guests are visiting a vastly under interpreted location that threatens to rob the site of its sacred significance.

Mountain Meadows Massacre National Historic Landmark in Utah is similarly as sparse in interpretative opportunities as Wounded Knee. Mountain Meadows was the scene of a series of attacks perpetrated by Mormon militia members in addition to Paiute Indians against a wagon train of emigrants traveling through the area. Mormon suspicion and fear of outsiders, lead to the attack on the wagon train and the ensuing siege of the survivors of the initial assault. After four days, the commander of the Mormon militia, John D. Lee, convinced the besieged emigrants to surrender peacefully. Required to put down their guns, the emigrant women and children were escorted out followed by the men and boys with armed militiaman beside them. After walking for about a mile, a predetermined signal was given and the militiamen opened fire on the men and boys. The Paiutes then came out from their hiding places and attacked the women and children. Almost all the members of the one-hundred and twenty wagon train party members were killed during the four days of the engagement. Two years after the Massacre, Major James H. Carleton of the U.S. Army arrived at the site with instructions to bury whatever remains endured of the massacre's victims. The remains of 34 victims were buried above

⁸ "Home," Healing Hearts at Wounded Knee, accessed March 11, 2017, <http://healingheartsatwoundedknee.com/>.

this grave a rude monument was built of loose granite stones, known as a carin.⁹ Visitors to the site three separate areas dedicated to the event (“Women and Children’s Massacre Site,” “Men and Boys Massacre Site,” and “Encampment/Siege Site.”) On a property overlooking the meadows, a monument was dedicated the victims of the event in 1990 listing the victims names in addition to a brief description of the event.¹⁰ This piece was meant to improve upon the efforts of Major Carleton. There is no official visitors center on the site so visitors are instead encouraged to “sit and contemplate” the events as they are depicted by the monuments.¹¹

This approach of under-stated interpretation may be effective to buffs going well out of their way in hopes of catching a glimpse of these historic sites but this approach makes it quite difficult for the average tourist to experience the gravity of what happened at the site without adequate foreknowledge. To accentuate this we turn to Helen Alexandra Keremedjiev’s 2013 thesis for the University of Montana in which she briefly compared two nineteenth century battlefields in the Treasure State, Little Big Horn and Rosebud. Though both engagements were part of the Sioux War of 1876, the “minimal on-site interpretation and commemoration practices” at Rosebud make the site appear to be less important to the garden variety visitor when one compares it with a site such as Little Big Horn with its “high-profile commemoration legacy.”¹²

It is certainly worth noting that while Wounded Knee and Mountain Meadows are designated National Historic Landmarks, Sand Creek differs in this aspect in that it is a

⁹ James H. Carleton “Special Report of the Mountain Meadows Massacre.” (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1902), 15.

¹⁰ “Mountain Meadows Massacre Site,” USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form, 32-35.

¹¹ “Mountain Meadows Massacre Site,” USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form, 8.

¹² Keremedjiev, “The Ethnography of On-Site Interpretation and Commemoration Practices: Place-Based Cultural Heritages at the Bear Paw, Big Hole, Little Bighorn, and Rosebud Battlefields,” 44.

National Park Service site. So while lack of adequate funding to improve current markers or staff an interpretive team is an understandable explanation as to why Wounded Knee and Mountain Meadows' interpretive efforts are rather minimal, it is not one that should be made for Sand Creek. This past year, the National Park Service anticipated the scheduling of Federal Documents at Sand Creek.¹³ The site was one of less than thirty-five sites to receive this distinction. Federal Documents would "identify the parks' legislative mandate, important resources and values, core elements, and the unit's most urgent NPS planning needs so that the program can target future funding to address those needs."¹⁴

Therefore, it is best to compare Sand Creek within the National Park Service in order to properly understand the impact that federal funding, a regularly maintained visitors center, an adequate interpretive staff, or even consistent commemoration could potentially provide the site. While further comparison with Little Big Horn and Sand Creek are difficult given the immense amount of scholarship, active commemoration, and destination visits devoted to the former as opposed to the relatively little of the later; there are two sites in the NPS system which would provide excellent case studies in the embrace of an active interpretation approach to a site of extreme violence against Native Americans: Big Hole National Battlefield and Washita Battlefield National Historic Site.

Big Hole is the site of the first major conflict in what would become the Nez Perce War of 1877 between the titular tribe and the United States government. Tensions between the two dated back to just a few months before Sand Creek when a band of Nez

¹³ "National Park Service Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Justifications" CONST-138.

¹⁴ "National Park Service Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Justifications" CONST-136.

Perce refused to sign a treaty that would allow further white encroachment of their traditional homeland. It would take another fourteen years for the Federal Government to begin enforcement of the treaty, giving the non-treaty Nez Perce an ultimatum of returning to the small reservation allotted to them or to continue to defy the United States government. While they decided initially to return, several warriors used the journey as an opportunity to vent their frustration by attacking white settlers along the route. This forced the hand of the non-treaty members and they decided to flee north to Canada to escape the wrath of the United States Army that was deployed in an attempt to bring the warriors to justice. Members of the 7th Infantry caught up with the Nez Perce in August and while engagement at Big Hole was a tactical success for the U.S. Army, the Nez Perce were able to escape capture. It would take another two months for the band to be captured; it would take place at Bear Paw, a mere forty-two miles from the border.

In 1883, a granite obelisk was erected to honor the dead American soldiers at Big Hole, beginning the century long process of memorialization that has taken place at the site. In 1909, the U.S. Forest Service used the area as an administrative site in order to protect the battlefield from real estate development. The next year, a Presidential proclamation established the site as Big Hole National Monument. Over the decade, historian and veteran of battle, Tom C. Sherrill would interpret the site for visitors, staking the battlefield where he recalled his comrades had fallen and preparing interpretive signs that described the battle from the Army perspective. In the 1920s and 1930s, Nez Perce historian Lucullus V. McWhorter added tribal voices to the interpretation of the site with his analysis of the battle in conjunction with the remaining Nez Perce survivors of the engagement. In 1952, a small stone monument meant to honor

the Nez Perce dead was erected on the site where it would remain until the 1980s when it was moved to the visitors center in addition to a memorial for Chief Joseph that McWhorter had erected during one of his battlefield visits. In 1992, the site became assimilated into the larger Nez Perce National Historic Park.¹⁵ A recently renovated on-site visitor's center offers exhibits on the history of the battle as well as Nez Perce culture in addition to a twenty-six minute video depicting the narrative of the event. The museum exhibits attempts to take the "whole story approach" incorporating the stories of both sides of the conflict based on both Sherrill and McWhorter's work allowing visitors to reflect and draw their own conclusions. Most importantly, during the summer season visitors can go on guided tours of the battlefield with self-guided tours offered year round.¹⁶ There are two trails offered to see the battlefield: The Nez Perce Camp Trail and the Siege Trail. The former is a little over a mile and traces where the Nez Perce camped

¹⁵ Nez Perce NHS incorporates thirty-eight sites throughout the states of Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. It's mission statement in regards to interpretation at the various sites is explicitly stated in Public Law 89-19 (May 15, 1965):

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That it is the purpose of this Act to facilitate protection and provide interpretation of sites in the Nez Perce country of Idaho that have exceptional value in commemorating the history of the Nation. To implement this purpose the Secretary of the Interior may designate as the Nez Perce National Historical Park various component sites in Federal and non-Federal ownership relating to the early Nez Perce culture, the Lewis and Clark Expedition through the area, the fur trade, missionaries, gold mining and logging, the Nez Perce war of 1877, and such other sites as he finds will depict the role of the Nez Perce country in the westward expansion of the Nation... [and] may be designated for inclusion in Nez Perce National Historical Park as sites in non-Federal ownership, and he may assist in the preservation, renewal, and interpretation of the properties... [And] To facilitate the interpretation of the Nez Perce country the Secretary is authorized to erect and maintain tablets or markers in accordance with the provisions contained in the Act approved August 21, 1935, entitled "An Act to provide for the preservation of historic American sites, buildings, objects, and antiquities of national significance, and for other purposes." (<http://uscode.house.gov/statutes/pl/89/19.pdf>)

While Big Hole's incorporation into Nez Perce NHS under Public Law 102-576 (The Nez Perce National Historical Park Additions Act of 1991) beholds it to this mission statement it is unique in the system in that it still posses its own Superintendent and retained the use of "national" as part of its official government name. Keremedjiev, "The Ethnography of On-Site Interpretation and Commemoration Practices: Place-Based Cultural Heritages at the Bear Paw, Big Hole, Little Bighorn, and Rosebud Battlefields," 88.

¹⁶ Keremedjiev, "The Ethnography of On-Site Interpretation and Commemoration Practices: Place-Based Cultural Heritages at the Bear Paw, Big Hole, Little Bighorn, and Rosebud Battlefields," 84.

and were attacked by the soldiers. The second trail is a one-mile in length and shows the Army's position during the later portion of the battle. In addition to these resources, there is also an annual commemoration ceremony organized by tribal members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Other participants include descendants of the 7th Infantry as well as civilian volunteers. The event is free to the public and includes activities such as "riderless horse ceremony, pipe ceremony, and traditional drum circle."¹⁷

In a visitor survey conducted at the site, Helen Keremedjiev found that the array of interpretive elements at the site's disposal were key in relaying to visitors the importance of the event on a national stage. 100% of her audience agreed with the statement that Big Hole was "a place of national importance."¹⁸ This was an even more significant number than cultural, spiritual, or any other importance the site held to the interviewed visitors.¹⁹ The unanimous opinion on Big Hole's national importance was only matched by the personal importance the guests placed on the site following their visit. In promoting Sand Creek's importance to the history of the West as outlined in the previous chapter not only would the National Park Service potentially raise the prestige of the site but it could also encourage a more personal connection with the site from its visitors as with Big Hole as seen through Keremedjiev's survey.

The extensive interpretation approach found at Big Hole is echoed in a site more closely connected to the history of the Cheyenne: Washita Battlefield National Historic Site. Washita took place in Oklahoma and involved a number of survivors of the Sand

¹⁷ "Commemorative Events" <https://www.nps.gov/biho/commemorative-events.html>.

¹⁸ Keremedjiev, "The Ethnography of On-Site Interpretation and Commemoration Practices: Place-Based Cultural Heritages at the Bear Paw, Big Hole, Little Bighorn, and Rosebud Battlefields," 144.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 141-151.

Creek Massacre, most prominently Black Kettle. During a particularly frenzied year of Indian raiding on the southern Great Plains in 1868, the commander of the department of the Missouri Maj. Gen. Phillip H. Sheridan came to the conclusion that warm weather campaigns against the raiders were ineffective. He concocted a plan to attack tribes during the winter while they were encamped and exposed and tasked Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer and the 7th U.S. Cavalry to execute it. Almost four years to the day of Sand Creek, Custer led a daybreak attack on an encampment of Cheyenne and Arapaho and within ten minutes the site was overrun. The majority of the casualties were women and children of the tribe but also amongst the dead was Black Kettle.²⁰ Sand Creek had, in effect, repeated itself down in Oklahoma.

In 1891, First Lieutenant Hugh L. Scott of the 7th Cavalry, concerned by the increased settlement of the area surrounding the site of the conflict decided to commemorate the site and the role that the 7th played in the engagement. He ordered a large stone pile to be gathered at the site believed to be the encampment of Black Kettle and had a stone slab engraved with the words “7th Cav. Nov. 27, 1868” beside the pile.²¹ After the marker began to deteriorate due to exposure to the elements of the Southwest, the landowners of the site disassembled the stones and positioned them upon a hill dubbed “the Custer observation knoll” in the early twentieth century. A few years later, Mrs. W.T. Bonner, the landowner’s wife, organized a group in Cheyenne, Oklahoma dedicated to the idea of creating a more permanent marker.²² But it would not be created

²⁰ Stephen Black, “Washita, Battle of the,” *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, www.okhistory.org (accessed February 01, 2017).

²¹ Jerome A. Greene, *Washita: The U.S. Army and the Southern Cheyennes, 1867–1869* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 195.

²² *Ibid.* 196.

until 1933 through the efforts of the city's Platonic Club.²³ Two decades later the Black Kettle Museum was built by the State of Oklahoma and in combination of the centennial of the event, the site took even more prominence. In 1965, Washita was designated a National Historic Landmark and became listed in the National Register of Historic Places the following year ultimately becoming a National Park Service site in 1996. In 2007, a new visitors center was opened to the public. The museum inside includes a breathtaking view of the Washita River valley in addition to exhibits depicting of the "clash of cultures that laid the foundation for the attack." There is also an almost half an hour film that depicts the story and the legacy of the engagement. The site offers two walking trails; one accentuates the natural beauty of the area while the latter is a self-guided one and a half mile walk down to the site of Black Kettle's village site.²⁴ Each November there is a commemoration of the engagement hosted by the site. The event is open to the public and includes a candlelight vigil in addition to a roll call of the fallen along the trail.²⁵ As with Big Hole, visitors are encouraged to see Washita as a place of national importance through the resources offered through the National Park Service. "Washita is significant in representing the ultimate manifestation of culture conflict resulting from the failure of intercultural diplomacy and the treaty system," summed up historian Jerome A. Greene in his assessment of the site. "The land itself promotes the interpretation not only of its significance but also many of the terrain features that contributed to the event, allowing

²³ Ibid. 197.

²⁴ "A Walk In The Park," <https://www.nps.gov/waba/planyourvisit/a-walk-in-the-park.htm>

²⁵ <https://www.nps.gov/waba/planyourvisit/event-details.htm?event=15CF3741-155D-451F-67BB2E32B7A54936>

visitors to achieve a broader and richer comprehension of what happened.”²⁶

While significant federal funding, a well staffed interpretive staff, and a series of conflicts that are at times a direct parallels to the events of Sand Creek draw the site closer in comparison to Big Hole and Washita than that of the Wounded Knee and Mountain Meadows Massacre sites, there is one significant difference that sets Sand Creek apart from these two and really all National Park Service sites. In an interview, Sand Creek National Historic Site director Alexa Roberts explained Sand Creek’s exceptionalism stems from its initial assessment by the United States government almost immediately following the event.

“Sand Creek is unique in the establishment as a National Historic Site in a number of ways . . . One is that in 1865 in the investigations following Sand Creek, it was determined by the United States to have been a massacre. So when Sand Creek was established as a National Historic Site and it was named Sand Creek **Massacre** National Historic Site the only site of this kind has been called a massacre site even though tribes would feel that many other sites should be called rightfully called massacre sites, Sand Creek actually was called that. So it sent a precedent in that regard and that’s based on historical record not because the Park Service suddenly decided to be historically or politically correct. It’s because that was documented in the records, there was never any question about Sand Creek being a massacre site. When it was named and established, what it was was owned up to right away and that set it apart from other sites immediately.”²⁷

Therefore, the unique situation of Sand Creek certainly makes it more difficult to simply apply the techniques of Big Hole and Washita to the site. However, there are elements of both sites that could certainly be applied to a series of recent initiatives regarding the improvement of the current interpretive model. At the time of writing, these initiatives

²⁶ Greene, *Washita: The U.S. Army and the Southern Cheyennes, 1867–1869*, 198.

²⁷ Alex Roberts Interview with the author February 2, 2016.

are being discussed between the National Park Service and the descendants of the Massacre victims. It is the hope of this author that the conclusions of the previous chapter as to the importance of Sand Creek in Western history can reinforce the necessity of such improvement initiatives and the final chapter of this work will be devoted to a proposal on how to introduce the aforementioned findings into these efforts. Before delving into this effort, it is first necessary to understand the once fragile nature of the National Park Service and descendant's partnership over the years in order to appreciate the advance of the current interpretive improvement initiatives. In doing so, it can also explain Sand Creek's recent minimal interpretive approach. In order to achieve this, one needs to look at a controversy that arose during the turn of the millennium when the idea for properly memorializing the site was still in its infancy.

Legislation to establish the site as a part of the National Park Service began in 1998 with the passage of the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site Study Act which mandated that a project team of historians, ethnographers, archeologists, geomorphologists, tribal representatives, and private property owners of the area map the "location and the extent" of the Massacre.²⁸ The team incorporated four elements into narrowing down the location of the massacre site: Historical research, oral histories, traditional tribal knowledge, and finally physical evidence.²⁹ The latter of these would only be conducted after through research of the former three. The historical research began with a consultation of two seemingly contradictory sets of maps from two very different sources. The first were produced by Cheyenne witness to the Massacre, the

²⁸ Christine Whitcare's "The Search for the Site of the Sand Creek Massacre," in *Prologue* (Summer 2001, Vol. 33 No.2).

²⁹ Christine Whitcare's "The Search for the Site of the Sand Creek Massacre," 6.

second by a soldier who came upon the lingering evidence of the devastation at Sand Creek four years after it occurred.

The former of the series was based upon the recollections of George Bent. At the beginning of the twentieth century Bent, in partnership with historian George Hyde, published his autobiography *Life of George Bent: Written From His Letters*. In this work, Bent devoted one of the chapters to his recollections on Sand Creek. The chapter contains discussion of a map, which Bent explains was produced in congruence with other Cheyenne elders present at the Massacre.³⁰ The map supposedly laid out many key elements to the massacre including the position of the camp, the shape of the creek, and the direction the Coloradans approached from. While the book contains no map (Hyde regretfully admits to having lost them,) later archival studies turned up four such maps.³¹ George Hyde is responsible for the creation of this series of maps, which were gathered from outlines from an 1890 U.S. Geological Survey map of southeastern Colorado. Bent filled in the dots over traced versions of the map that Hyde provided him. The first map pinpointed the Massacre at the North Bend of Sand Creek. However, a state-sponsored archeological survey of that area had proved inconclusive.³² The second map placed the Massacre site twenty miles below the South Bend, which was also disproved. It should be pointed out that according to later historians, this particular year of geological surveys is particularly poor so Hyde was pinpointing the location on a severely flawed outline.³³ The final two maps were drawn exclusively by Bent a decade after the survey tracings

³⁰ Bent, *Life of George Bent*, 151.

³¹ Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre*, 95.

³² National Park Service, "Sand Creek Massacre Project Vol. 1: Site Location Study," 12

³³ Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre*, 99.

Sherman on a tour of Western military sites in 1868, as the key to the village location.³⁵

During the tour, as one particular soldier recalls, the escort made a stop at Sand Creek:

After dinner General Sherman requested that all the escort hunt all over the battleground and pick up everything of value. He wanted to take the relics back to Washington. We found many things, such as Indian baby skulls; many skulls of men and women; arrows, some perfect, many broken, spears, scalps, knives, cooking utensils, and many other things too numerous to mention.³⁶

Bonsall's map was prepared at the stop and reflects standard map-making procedures carried out by the United States Army. Part strip map, part journal, the map pinpointed the massacre along a two mile line with the village placed to the north of Dawson's South Bend. Greene came across this map almost entirely by chance while collaborating with historian David Halaas, a biographer of George Bent, "When David pulled out that Bonsall map . . . I'm not sure he'd ever had a chance to evaluate it and when I looked at it I couldn't believe my eyes. I thought that this was the Rosetta Stone for what we were working on."³⁷ As plans for an archeological survey began to form, Greene concluded that the site of the village must lie where Bonsall placed it.

³⁵ "Without question it is the most important document yet located to convincingly posit the site, which is designated thereon as 'Chivingtons Massacre' National Park Service, 44.

³⁶ Journal of the march of the men belonging to the Garrison of Fort Lyon, C.T., under the command of Lieut. S.W. Bonsall 3rd Infantry, from Old Fort Lyon C.T., to Cheyenne Wells, pursuant to S.O. No 66 Hdqrs Fort Lyon C.T. June 12, 1868," NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers.

³⁷ Jerome Greene, Interview with author, April 10, 2015.

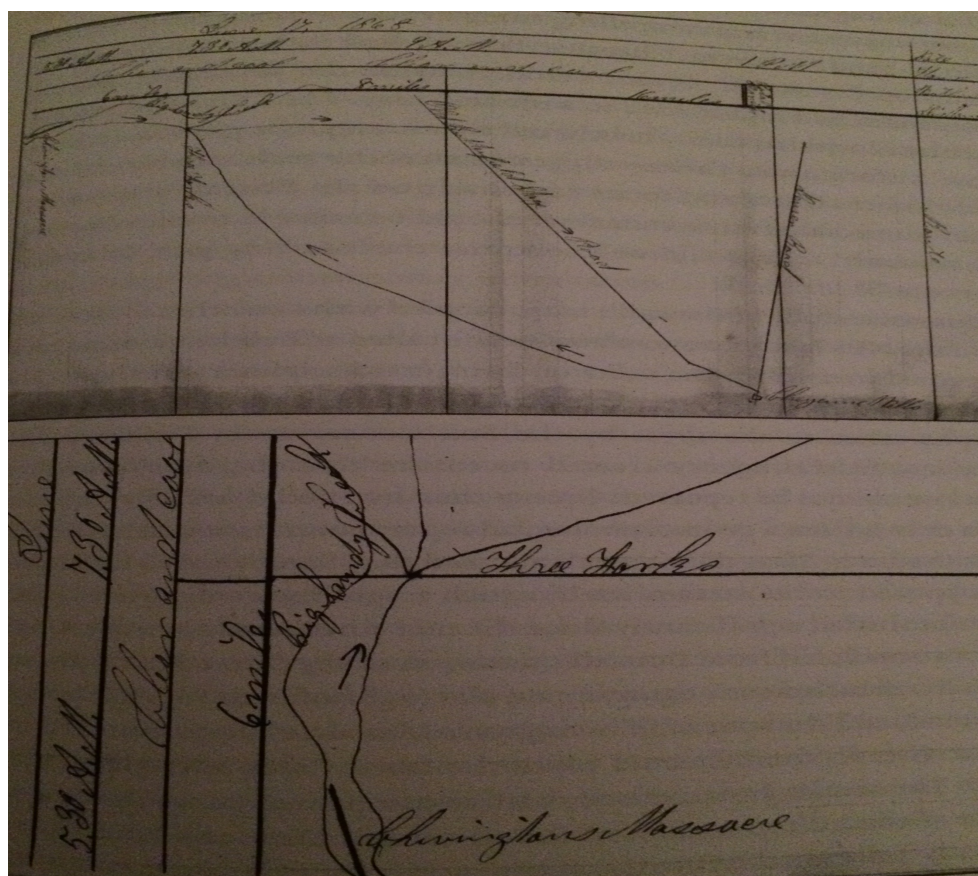


Figure 2: A section of Bonsall’s map, which indicates the Sand Creek village site as “Chivington’s Massacre”, located before Sand Creek splits into two separate streams. (Photographed by the author from Ari Kelman’s “A Misplaced Massacre”, 101.)

For decades, Cheyenne and Arapahoe descendants of the massacre’s victims pinpointed the locations of Black Kettle’s camp as well as the massacre site based primarily on a series of oral as well as spiritual traditions.³⁸ Many Cheyenne descendants attested that the site lay where George Bent had pinpointed the location of the village. Their insistence was due in large part to the fact that a number of Cheyenne elders had experienced spiritual awakenings on the land after the Cheyenne Arrow Keeper had

³⁸ Whitcare’s “The Search for the Site of the Sand Creek Massacre,” describes these beliefs and how they were incorporated into the titular search.

announced the Bend as “Cheyenne Earth” in 1978.³⁹ Among those who encountered spiritual forces on the site was Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell whose who related his experience to the crew of the PBS documentary *The West*:

I went to the Sand Creek site years ago . . . and I was all alone there. It was about six in the morning, just as the sun was coming up. And it was very, very quiet and I swear I heard babies crying. And it was such a strong emotional experience for me, I left there. But I’ve talked to several of my cousins who have also gone there really early in the morning and they say the same thing.⁴⁰

Finally, before the archeological survey could get underway, a geomorphological survey of the area was needed. This was meant to determine how much change had taken place in the soil since 1864 and how much probability there was of uncovering artifacts. There was a very good chance that the layer of soil on which the Massacre occurred could have been lost to flooding, erosion, or other natural factors in the past couple of decades. However, the survey showed little change had taken place in the soil since 1864 and the artifacts could be within the range of a standard metal detector.⁴¹

³⁹ National Park Service, 10. For more on the history of the role of the Arrow Keeper in the formation of Cheyenne culture identity see Harold N. Ottoway’s article “A Possible Origin for the Cheyenne Sacred Arrow Complex,” *Plains Anthropologist* Vol. 15 No. 48 (May 1970), 94-98. For more on the role of the Arrow Keeper in the Twentieth Century, William Wayne Red Hat Jr. & Sibylle M. Schlesier “William Wayne Red Hat, Jr.: Cheyenne Keeper of the Arrows.”

⁴⁰ *The West*, “Death Runs Riot.”

⁴¹ Amy M. Holmes and Michael McFaul, “Geomorphological and Geoarcheological Assessment: Possible Sand Creek Massacre Site, Dawson Property, Kiowa County, Colorado” 1999, manuscript on file, Intermountain Regional Office, National Park Service, Lakewood, CO.

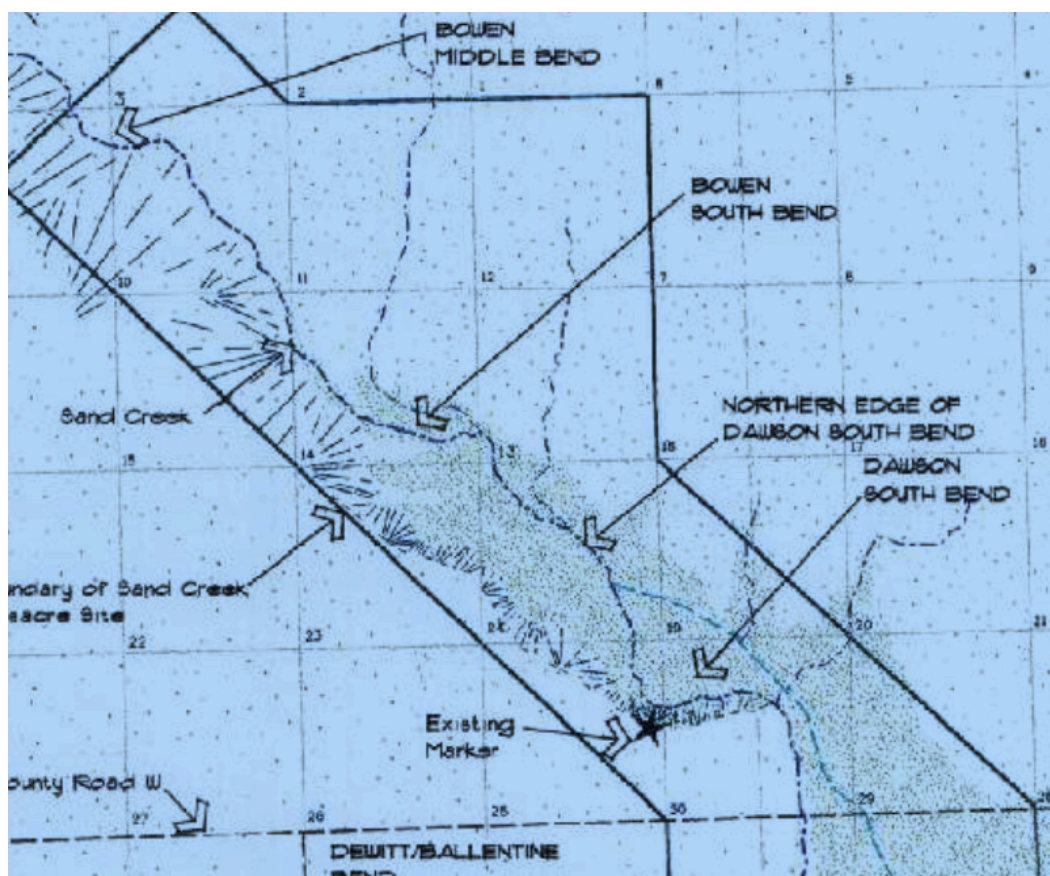


Figure 3: A map of the proposed boundaries of the Archeological survey of the area. Bent's maps have the village site location in the Dawson South Bend. Whereas the Bonsall map indicates the village site at the Northern edge of the Dawson South Bend. (*National Park Service*).

The archeological survey began in the May of 1999 and was lead by National Park Service archeologist Douglas D. Scott, a noted battlefield archeologist known for his previous work at Little Big Horn and Washita. The team included NPS staff, volunteers, landowners, and descendants who began by covering the Dawson South Bend. Over the next two days, the researchers uncovered a great deal of metal but nothing produced could be concretely linked back to 1864.⁴² This was particularly frustrating to the Cheyenne descendants whose oral and cultural traditions linked the area to this particular curve of Sand Creek. On the second day of the survey, at a location north of the

⁴² Doug Scott, Interview with author, April 13, 2015.

monument, the metal detectors began to steadily shrill. Almost as if on cue it was in the location that Bonsall's map had pinpointed. The teams uncovered a trove of archeological treasures: bullets, arrowheads, and fragments from a mountain howitzer that was recorded as being used in the Massacre. Though originally the discoveries were only tentatively celebrated, the Cheyenne descendants involvement in the process of unearthing the artifacts soon caused a large amount of excitement in the whole group: "[T] here was a consultant named Mildred Red Cherries," Douglas Scott told me in an interview, "[S] he picked up a shovel from one of the volunteers . . . and started digging and looking at the stuff and before the day was over (and the next several days) most of the Cheyenne and Arapaho were out there picking up stuff and looking at stuff and getting excited about it."⁴³

⁴³ Scott, Interview with author, April 13, 2015.

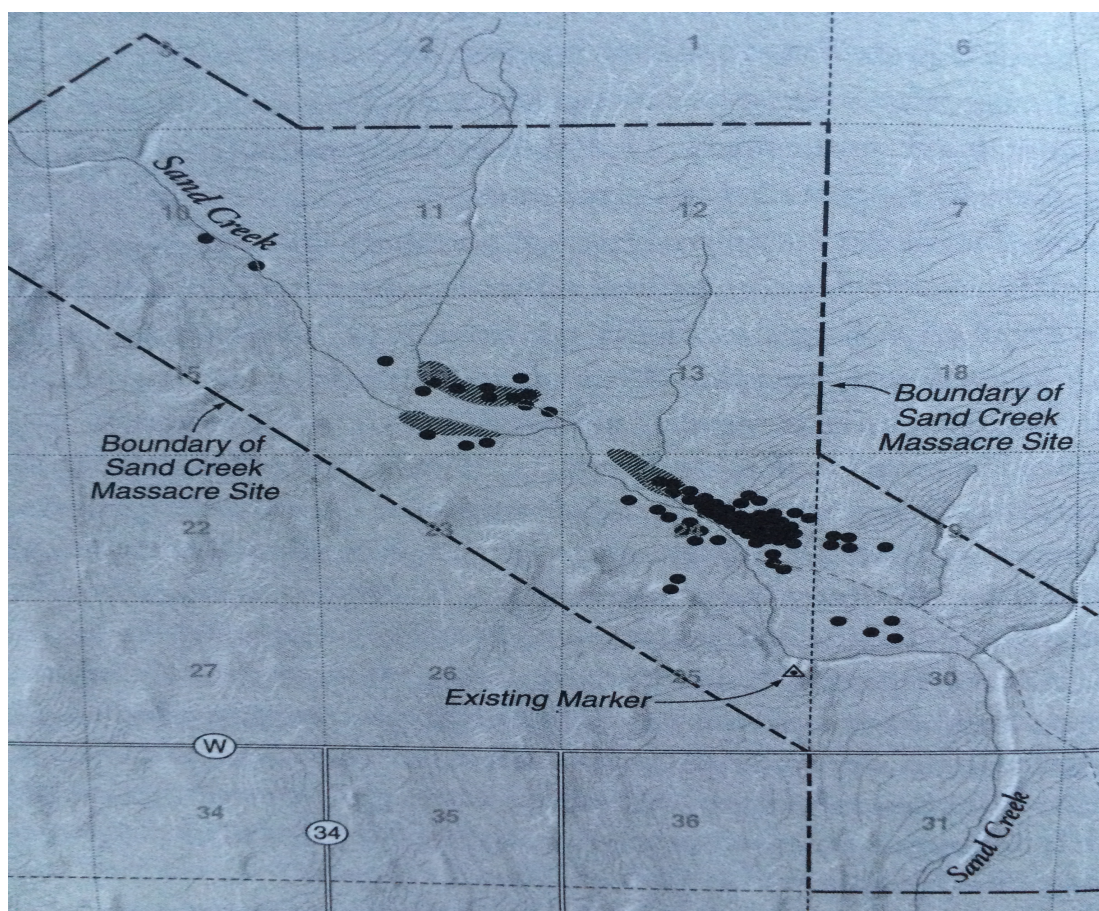


Figure 4: A map of the archeological discoveries made by the team led by Douglas Scott. (Photographed by the author from Ari Kelman's *A Misplaced Massacre*, 128.)

For a few brief hours it seemed as though the initial differences between the two in regards to the site location was forgotten, due to the joy brought on by archeological discovery. However, after the conclusion of the archeological survey, cracks began to form in the framework of the collaboration in regards to the differences in the village site location. Scott and Greene would later collaborate on a book entitled *Finding Sand Creek: History, Archeology, and the 1864 Massacre Site* that brought academic attention to the findings of the archeological team earlier that year. Well received by academic journals, the monograph articulated the frustrations of the conflicting sides as the question of what to do. The Sand Creek site location placement was now fodder for

debate in historical and archeological academic circles.⁴⁴ In an earlier article for *Historical Archeology*, which would serve as the jumping off point for the book, Scott articulately explain to his colleagues the issues that had arisen in the aftermath of the survey and encapsulates the struggles archeologists can encounter when native views and understandings are found to be contrary to their findings:

The Sand Creek case provides us with a jarring example of another reality, that not everyone shares the same cultural values or ascribes the same weight to disparate lines of evidence. To those of us trained in scientific methods of analysis, the answer seems simple. Three lines of evidence, historical documentation, archeological data, and oral tradition are evaluated and a conclusion drawn. Where one part of one line of evidence, oral tradition, diverges from others we explain it as the failure of memory to be passed accurately from three to five generations. Thus we accept the preponderance of scientific evidence and emerge with a reasonable and scientifically defensible conclusion. In the Sand Creek case, however, we have failed to consider the deep-seated cultural values and meanings placed on the traditional site by traditional Native American religious and cultural practitioners.⁴⁵

Roberts, who at that time was still filling in the oral history aspect of what would later become the parks' interpretive foundation, echoes Scott's statement as she cites the conflict representing a much larger theme in the park's creation process.

When the Park Service drew its conclusions about where the village site was and sort of declared that before the oral histories were done being collected. It didn't agree with how the Bent maps were then being interpreted . . . that was taken in an insulting manner by the tribes because it was disregarding the Bent map and George Bent was half-Cheyenne so it was as if to say that Cheyenne knowledge was wrong . . . It wasn't that difference [the two locations are about three-quarters of a mile apart] I don't think that was the issue. It was a perception of who has

⁴⁴ Kurt Hackemer, review of *Finding Sand Creek: History, Archeology, and the 1864 Massacre Site* by Jerome Greene and Douglas Scott, *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (Spring 2006): 79-80 & John R. Johnson, review of *Finding Sand Creek: History, Archeology, and the 1864 Massacre Site* by Jerome Greene and Douglas Scott, *The Public Historian*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Summer 2005): 71-73.

⁴⁵ Douglas Scott "Oral Traditions and Archeology: Conflict and Concordance Examples From Two Indian War Sites," *Historical Archeology*, Vol. 37, No. 3, Remembering Landscapes of Conflict (2003): 55-65.

intellectual authority to say so and whether or not tribal knowledge was deemed as regarded.⁴⁶

According to Roberts, the issues with interpreting the exact location of the site do not lie in a struggle of geographic discrepancies or technicalities. The concern lies in maintaining a respect for the integrity of Cheyenne knowledge at a site where there still remains an unresolved source of cultural suffering. This issue of who holds intellectual authority at sites of Native American cultural suffering is one of the key challenges that faced the collaborators as well as contemporary Public Historians.⁴⁷ This authority means more than right and wrong; it is a binding factor of tradition and history for Native Americans and their backstories. The issue of who owns the past and who has the authority to speak about the hard truths of colonization is an issue that is inherent both in the case of Sand Creek as well as in other sites of public history involving Native Americans. There is also the issue addressing the legacy of unresolved grief by a community in this situation that is also extremely important to understanding the inability of the descendants to simply accept and adapt to the changes the archeological survey uncovered.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Roberts, April 4, 2015.

⁴⁷ For more on Intellectual Authority and Native American Historical Memory see: Soya Atalay "Indigenous Archeology as a Decolonizing Process" *American Indian Quarterly* Vol. 30 No. 3&4 Special Issue: Decolonizing Archaeology (Summer/Autumn 2006), 280-310. Also, Stephen W. Sillman & T.J. Ferguson, "Consultation and Collaboration with Descendent Communities" in *Voices in American Archeology* Eds. Wendy Ashmore, Dorothy T. Lippert, and Barbara J. Mills. (Washington: The SAA Press, 2010).

⁴⁸ Amy Lonetree's work *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America In National and Tribal Museums* shows that the issues the collaborators were beginning to undergo is a contemporary issue for properly memorializing Native American sites and museums. In her work, which looks at three separate museums: The "hybrid" Mille Lacs Indian Museum in Minnesota, built through the collaboration of the Ojibwe people and the Minnesota Historical Society. The Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C. which ultimately in the author's eyes abandoned of representing the government's genocidal policies representing some of the inherent struggles of historical collaboration between two cultures. Finally, the Ziibiwing Center for Anishinabe Culture develops the most complete

Shawn Gillette, the chief interpreter at Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site, summarized the effects the event continued to have on contemporary Cheyenne and Arapaho descendants thusly: “You can’t even say the impact because it’s still felt today. As personal loss was [for Americans on] 9/11, Sand Creek was to the Cheyenne and Arapahoe. It still resonates to this day.”⁴⁹ Past scholarly debates about the status of the events that occurred at Sand Creek have prevented proper recognition of the damage done to the Cheyenne and Arapaho at the site. The long-time unrecognized massacre prevented proper observance of the lives lost, damaging relationships with the Cheyenne and Arapaho nations. It expands to the pain that accompanies the lack of recognition for the site on which tribal blood was spilt as well as the questioning of their knowledge of the area and the events that occurred there.

The placement and interpretation of the site was but one of many struggles that the Sand Creek Massacre National Historical Site would undergo before its ultimate creation as competing interest from two different landowners who claimed to own a share of the village site, calls for reparations from the descendants, conflicts between the community on the medium of message boards as to the correct interpretation in regards to labeling Sand Creek as a “massacre” or not, even concerns that the site might be converted into a casino when gaming mogul Jim Druck purchased the land. All of these

mode of decolonization in her eyes but had less outside input in the creation of the museum than those previously mentioned. For the purposes of this paper, the author highly recommends looking at the first two museums for both the perils and triumphs of intercultural collaboration while the final museum is a good example of the proper memorial of tragic historical events.

⁴⁹ Shawn Gillette, Interview with the Author, February 6, 2016.

crises seemed to have the potential to rip the project apart at the seams.⁵⁰ It would take seven more years but Sand Creek National Historic Site was finally opened to the public in 2007.

However, while many of the other crises were solved before or during the Park's first few years interpretation was still an issue that loomed over the park's future as it headed towards its celebration of its first decade in existence and in talking with Park Director Alexa Roberts in 2015, that one issue was readily apparent:

After the site was established and opened to the public in 2007, we [The Park Service] don't do any interpretation on the site that pinpoints any locations. We don't have any maps that show where the projected village site is . . . We talk about the Massacre site; we talk about the whole massacre. We've just put that aside and haven't dwelled upon specific internal features of the site and haven't said anything one way or another about where the village site was. People do ask but we say it's what you see in front of you . . . But we have not drawn any boundaries that are used in any kind of public interpretation. After the site location studies we didn't drop it we've been studying it ever since but we didn't interpret it for the Public . . . We agreed that there was a point of disagreement and set out as a goal to work towards clarifying that.⁵¹

Roberts cited the fifteen years of a spirit of collaboration that existed between members of the Park Service and the descendants as one of the site's strongest assets. In an interview with her earlier this year, Roberts reflected on the changes that took place since last we spoke and how important the collaborative efforts were towards resolving the issue of site location:

[T]hrough that research that has been ongoing for a number of years we have come to a consensus we are able to show the site and other locations on a map. . . We've reached concurrence on what the internal features and sort of the layout of the site. In fact we have a new Park brochure that is currently in progress it's a rewrite of our old one and it will have maps that clarify what we formerly

⁵⁰ The complete saga of the creation of the Sand Creek Massacre National Historical Site can be found in great detail in Dr. Kelman's book as each chapter and crisis highlights the fragile nature of this intercultural collaboration.

⁵¹ Roberts, April 4, 2015.

presented as sort of a vague matter since we are now able to be much more specific. Then we can talk about with much more clarity those issues surrounding those site locations.⁵²

Having come to a concurrence regarding the issue, Roberts and her colleagues are now turning their attention towards improvements on the site's current interpretive methods. As with the issue of site location, they are working in direct collaboration with the tribal descendants in order to formulate a more comprehensive interpretive structure with even hints at the incorporation of a small but significant tangible marker at the site. This move away from the minimalist approach will nonetheless still attempt to honor the sacred nature of the site. Further interpretive improvements have the potential to give white visitors a brief but powerful glance of the Cheyenne experience by not only providing a powerful tangible image but also by placing it at the heart of the most important development in the history of the region. In the final chapter, the conclusions of the previous chapters as to the historical importance of Sand Creek in narrative of the West will be recommended as a part of the improved interpretive initiative so that future generations can fully grasp the importance and sacred nature of this crucial site.

⁵² Alexa Roberts, interview with author February 2, 2017.

CHAPTER IV: RECOMMENDATIONS ON IMPROVEMENTS TO CURRENT INTERPRETIVE EFFORTS

The Massacre at Sand Creek, though often depicted as an event of explosive violence in a time and place where such outbursts were sadly commonplace, is in reality a pivotal moment in the history of the West. Positioned at the end of the Borderlands era in Colorado, the Massacre and its subsequent aftermath brought about Greater Reconstruction to the Plains. However, Sand Creek's historical legacy and its subsequent interpretation by the National Park Service has, at the time of this writing, been quite understated at the Massacre site especially in regards to its aforementioned significance. A brief overview of the challenges that the site has encountered even before it was opened to the public in 2007 makes its current minimal interpretive structure understandable. However, in the past few years a significant number of those challenges have been resolved leaving Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site on the cusp of groundbreaking changes a decade after the site's opening. It is with that in mind that I make these proposals that have the potential not only to preserve the sacred nature of this site of conscious but also bring the message of the event to a much wider audience of both scholars and site visitors.

As the site begins its move away from the minimalist approach that can often be found at other sites of extreme violence in the West, there are a number of different opportunities for Sand Creek NHS to potentially embrace from tangible markers or monuments to shifts in the interpretive narrative of the Massacre. In looking at the

former of these opportunities, there is a particular aspect of the narrative of the attack on the encampment that has resonated over the past hundred and fifty years and could continue to bring awareness to future visitors of the. As noted in the National Park Services' resource study: "Frequent mention was made [by the descendants] of the need to have a physical memorial at the site commemorating those massacred at the site and the need to respect the sacred nature of the site."¹ This could best be achieved with the placement of a single tipi with the white and American flag flying above it on the grounds in honor of the memory of Black Kettle who flew such implements in attempt to show Chivington and his men the peacefully intentions of those encamped. The site has used the tipi in the past, though it was only for photographic purposes during the opening of the Park. In using it for this purpose in the past, the directors of the site and the descendants clearly understood the powerful meaning conveyed in the structure and it has the potential to become a permanent fixture in the park. The recent consensus reached by collaborative measures of the Massacre site's location would only further the power of such a commemorative marker as visitors looking out at the sacred grounds would be able to glimpse a tangible and historically accurate vision of the nonviolent intent Black Kettle and his band. In addition to this, it would also show how Chivington and his men disregarded the band's protection by the U.S. Government in addition to the most international recognized symbol of peace and continued their attack on Sand Creek. As opposed to the aforementioned sites of extreme violence in Chapter III, the inclusion of the tipi would not just be a dedicatory effort crafted after the events it's meant to observe but would also serve as an active aspect of the site's narrative. In addition to this, a

¹ National Park Service, "Sand Creek Massacre Project Volume 2: Special Resource Study,"11.

singular visible memorial placed on otherwise sacred ground would allow visitors to contemplate the

In addition to tangible markers, changes in the current interpretive narrative could provide a more significant framework to the events importance in the history of the region. That being said, it is understandable for Sand Creek's current interpretive direction to move towards relating the event into the broader context of the Civil War. Not only is this a direction that past scholars have embarked upon as seen in Chapter II but it also a method that is more likely to attract the average National Park visitor. This past year, sites related to the Civil War welcomed a combined 29,979,561 visitors.² The site's location and timeframe provide ample opportunity for programs that could provide interpretive overview of the Civil War in the Western Territories in addition to the current narrative of what happened at Sand Creek. The site has also already produced a film in conjunction with the Post Modern Company entitled "The Sand Creek Massacre and The Civil War." However, narrowing the experience at Sand Creek to an event that only lasted four years and was significantly different in its execution in the East than it

² Statistics added up from 2016 visitor data of Antietam NB, Chesapeake & Ohio Canal NHP, Dry Tortugas NP, Fort Vancouver NHS, Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania NMP, General Grant NM, George Washington Carver NM, Gettysburg NMP, Hampton NHS, Harper's Ferry NHP, Homestead NMA, Independence NHP, Jean Lafitte NHP, Lincoln Boyhood NM, Lincoln Home NHS, Monocacy NP, Natchez Trace Parkway, Pea Ridge NMP, President's Park, Richmond NBP, Saint-Guadens NHS, San Juan Island NHP, Sand Creek Massacre NHS, Shenandoah NP, Shiloh NMP, Springfield Armory NHS, Stones River NB, Timucuan EHP, Ulysses S. Grant NHS, Vicksburg, NMP, and Wilson's Creek NB via the Annual Park Ranking Report for Recreation Visits list. ([https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/SSRSReports/National%20Reports/Annual%20Park%20Ranking%20Report%20\(1979%20-%20Last%20Calendar%20Year\)](https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/SSRSReports/National%20Reports/Annual%20Park%20Ranking%20Report%20(1979%20-%20Last%20Calendar%20Year)).) Sites included were taken from the "Places" tab of the National Park System's website dedicated to the Civil War (<https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/places.htm>) though it should be noted that there are some exceptions. I could not find data for the sites Civil War Defenses of Washington D.C. or Clara Barton NHS also listed in the "Places" tab. Also the website contains some glaring omissions of Civil War sites most notably: Appomattox Court House NHP, Chickamauga and Chattanooga NMP, and Fort Sumter NM.

was in the West threatens to depreciate the truly revolutionary changes that occurred in the region with the Massacre and its aftermath. Therefore, it would be beneficial for Sand Creek to take a much broader narrative approach in for both visitors and scholars of the site to understand the much larger historical forces at work amidst Chivington's 1864 attack.

In order to fully promote the interpretive narrative of the Massacre brining an official end to the Borderland society and being the harbinger of Greater Reconstruction in the West, it is first necessary to further the link between Sand Creek NHS and Bent's Old Fort NHS. The groundwork has already been clearly laid as seen in the opening scenes of the film "The Sand Creek Massacre and The Civil War." The film opens with an introduction to William Bent as George Bent's father and paints an incredible picture of the multicultural society that George was brought up in and around the fort. Bent's Old Fort is a natural narrative prologue to Sand Creek as the world that William Bent created in the Arkansas River Valley would be destroyed by the historical forces at play in the attack on Sand Creek as shown in the opening of Chapter II. Located only an hour and thirty minutes away from each other, Sand Creek and Bent's Old Fort could certainly benefit from the shared narrative at both sites. Practically speaking, there would be the opportunity to share visitors at the site. This past year, Bent's Old Fort NHS had four times as many visitors as Sand Creek Massacre NHS despite the two site's relatively close locations.³ However, last year Sand Creek Massacre NHS saw its second highest ever visitor totals with 6,847 recreational visits at the site. Bent's Old Fort, which saw its

³ Via the 2016 the Annual Park Ranking Report for Recreation Visits list. [https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/SSRSReports/National%20Reports/Annual%20Park%20Ranking%20Report%20\(1979%20-%20Last%20Calendar%20Year](https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/SSRSReports/National%20Reports/Annual%20Park%20Ranking%20Report%20(1979%20-%20Last%20Calendar%20Year).

numbers rise to their highest levels in almost a decade this past year (31,948) could also benefit from visitors coming directly from this up-and-coming NPS site to their own.⁴ In depicting Sand Creek as the end of the Borderlands society as depicted in Bent's Old Fort, both sites could directly benefit in terms of interpretive narrative structure and visitor numbers bringing about significant improvements to the future of both of these NPS sites.

While there is not necessarily a similar link in the Greater Reconstruction interpretive narrative between Sand Creek Massacre NHS and another nearby site, this does not mean that the incorporation of the event into the larger historical context is not without its benefits. With the sesquicentennial of the Civil War coming to a close in 2015, a number of sites dealing with Reconstruction are preparing for their own commemorative celebrations. While it would certainly be naïve to think that visitor numbers for sites such as the Tuskegee Institute NHS or Andrew Johnson NHS would reach the levels of Antietam NB in 2012 (510,921 visitors) or Gettysburg NMP in 2013 (1,213,349 visitors), that is not to say that there wouldn't be an uptick in visitation if the site were to adopt the Greater Reconstruction narrative in the near future. However, more importantly than visitation numbers, the adaption of the Greater Reconstruction narrative will place the park in a larger historical narrative and thereby raise the prominence of the event in the eyes of both visitors and future scholars. In connecting the retaliatory attacks on sites such as Julesburg and Mud Springs with the increased military presence in the West following the Civil War, Sand Creek can be interpreted as a cause at a number of

⁴ Via the 2016 Annual Visitation Reports by Years: 2006 to 2016
[https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/SSRSReports/National%20Reports/Annual%20Visitation%20By%20Park%20\(1979%20-%20Last%20Calendar%20Year](https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/SSRSReports/National%20Reports/Annual%20Visitation%20By%20Park%20(1979%20-%20Last%20Calendar%20Year).

NPS sites that housed the U.S. Army during the Indian Wars (i.e. Fort Larned and Fort Laramie NHS). Similarly, the activation of these soldiers in sites of conflict across the West can be traced back to the retaliatory raids made following the Sand Creek Massacre.

However, it is not just in the increased presence of the U.S. military in the West that the Massacre is a key component of Greater Reconstruction in the region, there is also a need for the inclusion of the U.S. Government's perception and treatment of Native Americans in the years following the Civil War that find an important prologue in the story of the aftermath of Sand Creek. Eastern outrage to the events in addition to the numerous military tribunals that were sent to investigate the actions of Sand Creek showed that racial attitudes towards Native Americans were evolving during this time in American history. Emboldened by the successes of Abolitionism, a number of Eastern humanitarians took the news of Sand Creek as an opportunity to inquire and later implement policy changes towards the U.S. Government's treatment of Native Americans. Men such as Samuel F. Tappan, who served as the chief military investigator in one of the Federal inquiries into Sand Creek would use that event to inform his attitudes towards Native Americans with his later appointment as a member of the Peace Commission that recommended the placement of the Plains tribes onto Reservations throughout the region. By placing Sand Creek in the interpretive narrative as a catalyst for the Reservation system, the Massacre's narrative extends from Carlisle, Pennsylvania to Fort Union in New Mexico spanning three decades longer than the current interpretive model which ends the chronicle in the months following Chivington's attack.

It is understood that an adoption of a broader sweeping narrative is predicated upon the agreement of two crucial elements of the current Sand Creek Massacre NHS

leadership: the Cheyenne and Arapaho descendants as well as Director Roberts and his staff. As documented in Chapter III, the cooperation between these two representative bodies has certainly seen its ups and downs over the years and I do not make these recommendations lightly. I understand that in incorporating Sand Creek into a larger historical account there is the potential to understate the profound effect the Massacre continues to have on both Cheyenne and Arapaho culture. Similarly, I understand that cooperation with other sites in restructuring interpretive narratives has the potential to be a rather long and possibly frustrating endeavor. However, were these interpretive recommendations to be adopted, it is the belief of this author that not only would a larger segment of the American public find a greater awareness and appreciation for this horrific event in Cheyenne and Arapaho culture but the Massacre would forever be associated as a turning point in Western and American history so that one day those looking out or at an image of a single tepee among the cottonwoods waving both the white and American flag would understand the profound changes that were made on that terrible November morning in 1864.

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