

Washita Battlefield

Washita Battlefield National Historic Site
Oklahoma

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



ILLUSTRATION BY STEVEN LANG

The attack came unexpectedly

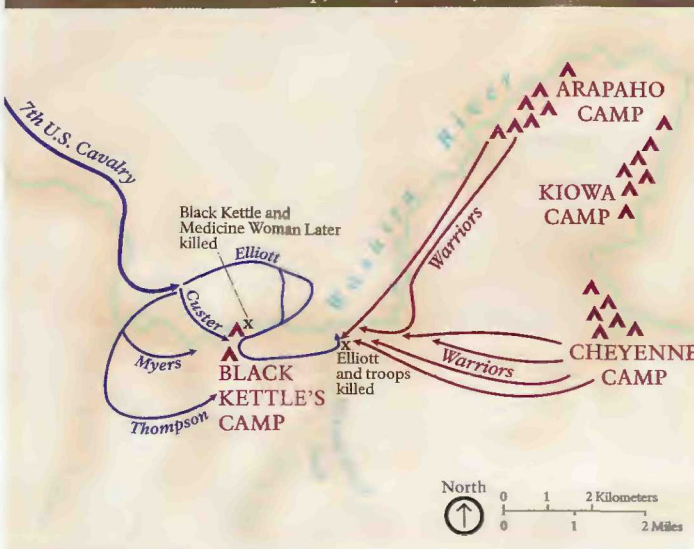
at morning's first light when the village was most vulnerable. It began with a rifle shot, a bugle sounding "Charge!" and a band playing the opening strains of "Garry Owen." In a moment all was tumult as the charging troopers of Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer's 7th U.S. Cavalry came splashing across the frigid Washita River into the sleeping Cheyenne camp of Chief Black Kettle. They came in four battalions. Custer led the largest straight into the village, as depicted above. Maj. Joel Elliott and Capt. William Thompson and Edward Myers led the others northeast and southwest in an attempt to surround the encampment. While Custer watched from a knoll to the south, the soldiers drove the Cheyenne from their lodges barefoot and half-clothed and pursued them in all directions. Some of the warriors fought and died in the village; others took up positions behind trees and in ravines and returned fire; many of them escaped. The village's leader, Black Kettle, and his wife Medicine Woman Later, were killed by soldiers while trying to cross the Washita River. When the firing ceased two hours later, approximately 30 to 60 Cheyenne lay dead in the snow and mud.

Following Sheridan's plan to cripple resistance, Custer ordered the slaughter of the village's pony and mule herds, estimated at over 800 animals. He also ordered the burning of the Cheyenne lodges, with all their winter supply of food and clothing. Then, realizing that many more Indians were threatening from the east, Custer feigned an attack toward their downriver camps and quickly retreated to Camp Supply with his captives—53 women and children. The engagement at the Washita might have ended very differently if the larger Indian encampments to the northeast had been closer to Black Kettle's camp. The impact of losing winter supplies, plus the knowledge that cold weather no longer provided protection from attack, forced many bands to accept reservation life.

Cheyenne ledger art from the 1870s depicting a dismounted warrior.

CHEYENNE LEDGER ART COURTESY OF DR. AND MRS. ROBERT B. PAMPHIL, JR., COLLECTION OF AMERICAN INDIAN ART

Attack on Black Kettle's Camp, November 27, 1868



North
0 1 2 Kilometers
0 1 2 Miles

Prelude to the Attack

Events leading to the attack at Washita River began on November 29, 1864, when troops under the command of Col. J.M. Chivington attacked and destroyed Black Kettle's village on Sand Creek, 40 miles from Fort Lyon, Colorado Territory. At the time, Black Kettle had been pursuing a policy of peace with whites and believed his village to be under U.S. Army protection. Black Kettle survived the attack, but at least 150 Cheyenne and Arapaho men, women, and children were killed and horribly mutilated. It came to be known as the Sand Creek Massacre and resulted in a massive public outcry as well as months of retaliatory raids by Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Lakota warriors.

When the army failed to end the raids, a federal commission was created to make peace with the raiding tribesmen. By the terms of the Treaty of Little Arkansas, signed on Oc-

tober 17, 1865, and the Treaty of Medicine Lodge of October 1867, the Cheyenne, Arapaho, and other tribes agreed to stop their raiding and settle on reservations in Indian Territory (now Oklahoma). There they were to receive permanent homes, agricultural implements, weapons and ammunition for hunting, and annuities of food, blankets, and clothing. The treaties did not bring peace. Many tribal officials refused to sign. Some who did sign had no authority to compel their people to comply with such agreements. And Congress was slow to ratify the treaties and annuities often failed to arrive. Warrior societies, mostly young men violently opposed to reservation life, continued hostilities.

Maj. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan, commanding the Department of the Missouri, adopted a policy that "punishment must follow crime."

Frustrated that more traditional campaigning methods failed to defeat the Plains warriors in the field, he prepared a winter campaign when Indian horses would be weak and unfit for all but the most limited service.

To this end, on November 23, 1868, Lt. Col. Custer set out from Camp Supply in Indian Territory with about 700 7th U.S. Cavalry troopers and a dozen Osage scouts. His objective: the Washita River valley where some 6,000 Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Kiowa had laid out winter camps. Traveling through a foot of new snow, the command reached the Washita valley shortly after midnight on November 27 and silently took up positions near an Indian encampment the scouts had discovered at a bend in the river. Coincidentally, the village was that of Black Kettle, who had survived Sand Creek and who had tried so diligently to avoid conflict.

Significant events in Cheyenne and Arapaho history, 1851 to 1869

- 1851** Treaty of Fort Laramie divides Great Plains into specific tracts of land for Cheyenne, Arapaho, and other signatories, who promise to live forever in peace in return for protection against white depredations.
- 1859** Discovery of gold in Colorado Territory brings influx of miners, farmers, and speculators with little regard for Indian rights or ways of life.
- 1861** Treaty of Fort Wise moves Cheyenne and Arapaho to a small reservation south of the Arkansas River to avoid conflict with emigrants and gold seekers.
- 1864-65** Cheyenne-Arapaho War begins after younger members of the tribes refuse to abide by the provisions of the Fort Wise treaty and range far beyond the reservation, clashing frequently with whites. This creates conditions that lead to the Sand Creek Massacre. In retaliation, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and allied Sioux attack Julesburg, Colorado Territory, and raid ranches and stage stations on South Platte River.
- 1865** Treaty of Little Arkansas ends Cheyenne-Arapaho War, with U.S. Government repudiating Sand Creek and promising reparations to the Cheyenne and Arapaho.
- 1866** Cheyenne warriors who had not signed the Little Arkansas treaty raid along Smoky Hill River in Kansas.
- 1867** Maj. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan takes command of U.S. forces in the West, proposing to bring peace to the Plains. Maj. Gen. Winfield S. Hancock begins campaign against Cheyenne and other tribes rumored to be planning attacks on Kansas settlements and transportation routes.
- 1868** Treaty of Medicine Lodge signed in hope of ending hostilities.
- 1868** Party of Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Sioux attack settlements along the Solomon and Saline rivers in Kansas.
- 1869** Battle of Summit Springs, last major encounter between U.S. cavalry and Plains Indians in Colorado Territory, destroying the cohesiveness of the Cheyenne Dog Soldiers and ending their effectiveness as a fighting group.



Magpie, who as a Cheyenne teenager survived the attack, recounted the event many times in later life.

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY CURTIS COLLECTION



Southern Plains War begins against the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Sioux, Kiowa, and Comanche. Lt. Col. Alfred Sully's summer campaign fails to suppress the tribes.

Sheridan's winter campaign continues with attack and destruction of Comanche village at Soldier Spring, Indian Territory, and the surrender of many Cheyenne and Arapaho in 1869.

Sheridan's winter campaign begins in October.

Cheyenne captives from Black Kettle's village, photographed at Camp Supply.



President Ulysses S. Grant's so-called "Peace Policy" is initiated, emphasizing "conquest by kindness" and viewing Indians as "domestic dependent nations" with which the U.S. must negotiate. On the Southern Plains it lasts until 1874.

A stone marker, carved in 1891 to identify Black Kettle's village site, is now in the park museum. Background ledger art shows guns being fired behind the horses.

Recipe for Disaster

In the decades before the Civil War the U.S. government regarded Indian tribes as sovereign and independent nations and sought ways to remove them from coveted lands as well as protect them against white encroachment. Congress devised a reservation policy that called for concentrating the Indians on small, well-defined tracts of land that legislators believed would be free from white intrusions. Some Plains tribes accepted life on reservations; others did not, continuing to hunt and live on traditional lands outside the reservations. This choice produced little conflict until the 1860s, when the harsh realities of Manifest Destiny saw more and more gold-seekers and land-hungry settlers penetrate the Plains and encroach on tribal hunting grounds. Unable to retreat beyond the reach of whites, many tribes, including the Cheyenne and Arapaho, decided to defend their freedom rather than submit to reservation life.

This led to attacks on wagon trains, stagecoaches, mining camps, and settlements, creating conditions that brought about the Sand Creek Massacre in 1864. Although the government repudiated Sand Creek and promised reparations to the Cheyenne in the Treaty of Little Arkansas (1865), both sides charged violations, and hostilities continued. When the Treaty of Medicine Lodge (1867) failed to end widespread Indian raids, Maj. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan, commanding the Department of the Missouri, prepared a bold and inventive winter campaign designed to catch the Indians when least mobile and most vulnerable. Among those targeted for destruction were the allied Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Kiowa tribes reported to be encamped in the Washita River valley.



Maj. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan
Unlike agents of the Indian Bureau, Sheridan drew no distinction between friendly and hostile Indians. For the sins of the few, he held the whole tribe accountable. "I am of the belief," he wrote at the start of the 1868-69 campaign, "that these Indians require to be soundly whipped, and the ring-leaders in the present trouble hung, their ponies killed, and such destruction of their property as will make them very poor." The attack on Black Kettle's village was the first implementation of the Army's strategic decision to launch "total war" against the Indians of the Southern Plains.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES



Lt. Col. George A. Custer
Sheridan believed that, despite a reputation for impulsive behavior, the flamboyant Custer's aggressiveness was the key to successfully implementing the new strategy of attacking the tribes of the Southern Plains in the winter when they were least prepared to resist. Custer's victory at Washita catapulted him into the public's imagination as the nation's preeminent Indian fighter and possibly helped inspire the behavior that led to his death at the Little Bighorn in 1876. He is seen here sporting the full beard and buckskin outfit he wore during the Washita Campaign.

LITTLE BIGHORN BATTLEFIELD NATIONAL MONUMENT



Maj. Joel Elliott
A dedicated, zealous officer, Elliott was Custer's second in command. His command discovered the Indian trail on November 26 that led the 7th U.S. Cavalry to Black Kettle's camp. He entered the village with Custer, then led a small detachment downstream in pursuit of fleeing Indians, where he and his command were cut off and killed. Custer's return to Camp Supply without determining the fate of Elliott and his men angered many fellow officers. The bodies of Elliott and the 17 soldiers who accompanied him were recovered from the battlefield two weeks later on December 11, 1868.

LITTLE BIGHORN BATTLEFIELD NATIONAL MONUMENT



Military forts shown in blue: Fort Bascom
Battle sites shown in red: Sand Creek



Chief Black Kettle
The night before the attack, Black Kettle returned to his village after a 100-mile trip to Fort Cobb, where he and Arapaho Chief Big Mouth unsuccessfully petitioned the post commander for peace and protection. Still confident of their safety, he resisted the entreaties of some of his people, including his wife, Medicine Woman Later, to move their camp closer to the larger Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Kiowa encampments downriver. Black Kettle has been characterized as "a good man with deep wisdom, who devoted his life to trying to lead his people to safety, working against forces too mighty to fight."

WESTERN HISTORY COLLECTIONS, UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA LIBRARIES



Edward W. Wynkoop
As Indian agent to the Arapaho and Cheyenne, he worked hard from 1866 to 1868 to prevent hostilities. He vigorously championed the cause of his charges and defended them when accused of depredations, blaming Congress for failing to appropriate funds for liberal food issues and withholding promised annuities. He resigned his post in protest over the Army's new Indian policy, refusing to be party to "the murder of innocent women and children." Wynkoop denounced the attack on Black Kettle's village, comparing Custer to Chivington and Washita to Sand Creek.

DENVER PUBLIC LIBRARY, WESTERN HISTORY COLLECTION

American Treaty History

Article six of the U.S. Constitution stipulates that "all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme law of the land." It makes no distinction between treaties with foreign nations and with Indian tribes. Between 1778 and 1871 the United States negotiated approximately 800 treaties with various Indian tribes. The Senate, however, ratified fewer than 400 (see list at right). About one-third of these were peace treaties. Two-thirds were land cessions, of which many were root causes of armed conflicts.

The Indian Appropriations Act of 1871 ended the practice of formal treaty-making but did not invalidate or impair obligations of previous treaties lawfully made and ratified. Few of those treaties, even when first made, were observed for long, sometimes because many Indians who had not signed them did not feel bound to abide by their provisions. More often, Congress failed to appropriate enough money to meet treaty obligations. Broken promises caused peaceful Indians to mistrust U.S. policy and encouraged others in their armed resistance. Such was the case with the Cheyenne and Arapaho (whose treaties are highlighted), creating the climate that led to the attack at Washita.

Old Cheyenne ledger art shows a warrior fighting with two soldiers.



CHEYENNE LEDGER ART COURTESY OF DR. AND MRS. ROBERT B. FAULKNER, JR., COLLECTION OF AMERICAN INDIAN ART

1778-1799

Treaty with the Delaware, 1778 • Six Nations, 1784 • Wyandot, etc., 1785 • Cherokee, 1785 • Choctaw, 1786 • Chickasaw, 1786 • Shawnee, 1786 • Wyandot, etc., 1789 • Six Nations, 1789 • Creeks, 1790 • Cherokee, 1791 • Cherokee, 1794 • Six Nations, 1794 • Oneida, etc., 1794 • Wyandot, etc., 1795 • Seven Nations of Canada, 1796 • Creeks, 1796 • Mohawk, 1797 • Cherokee, 1798

1800-1809

Treaty with the Chickasaw, 1801 • Choctaw, 1801 • Creeks, 1802 • Seneca, 1802 • Seneca, 1802 • Choctaw, 1802 • Delawares, etc., 1803 • Eel River, etc., 1803 • Kaskaskia, 1803 • Choctaw, 1803 • Delawares, 1804 • Piankeshaw, 1804 • Cherokee, 1804 • Sauk and Foxes, 1804 • Wyandot, etc., 1805 • Chickasaw, 1805 • Delawares, etc., 1805 • Cherokee, 1805 • Cherokee, 1805 • Creeks, 1805 • Choctaw, 1805 • Piankashaw, 1805 • Sioux, 1805 • Cherokee, 1806 • Ottawa, etc., 1807 • Osage, 1808 • Chippewa, etc., 1808 • Delawares, etc., 1809 • Supplementary Treaty with the Miami, etc., 1809 • Wea, 1809 • Kickapoo, 1809

1810-1819

Treaty with the Wyandot, etc., 1814 • Creeks, 1814 • Potawatomi, 1815 • Piankashaw, 1815 • Teton, 1815 • Sioux of the Lakes, 1815 • Sioux of St. Peter's River, 1815 • Yankton Sioux, 1815 • Makah, 1815 • Kickapoo, 1815 • Wyandot,

*In this list of treaties, "etc." means "and other tribes."

etc., 1815 • Osage, 1815 • Sauk, 1815 • Foxes, 1815 • Iowa, 1815 • Kansas, 1815 • Cherokee, 1816 • Cherokee, 1816 • Sauk, 1816 • Sioux, 1816 • Winnebago, 1816 • Wea and Kickapoo, 1816 • Ottawa, etc., 1816 • Cherokee, 1816 • Chickasaw, 1816 • Choctaw, 1816 • Menominee, 1817 • Oto, 1817 • Ponca, 1817 • Cherokee, 1817 • Wyandot, etc., 1817 • Creeks, 1818 • Grand Pawnee, 1818 • Noisy Pawnee, 1818 • Pawnee Republic, 1818 • Pawnee Marhar, 1818 • Quapaw, 1818 • Wyandot, etc., 1818 • Wyandot, 1818 • Peoria, etc., 1818 • Osage, 1818 • Potawatomi, 1818 • Wea, 1818 • Delawares, 1818 • Miami, 1818 • Chickasaw, 1818 • Cherokee, 1819 • Kickapoo, 1819 • Kickapoo, 1819 • Chippewa, 1819

1820-1829

Treaty with the Chippewa, 1820 • Ottawa and Chippewa, 1820 • Kickapoo, 1820 • Wea, 1820 • Kickapoo of the Vermilion, 1820 • Choctaw, 1820 • Creeks, 1821 • Creeks, 1821 • Ottawa, etc., 1821 • Osage, 1822 • Sauk and Foxes, 1822 • Florida Tribes of Indians, 1823 • Sauk and Foxes, 1824 • Iowa, 1824 • Quapaw, 1824 • Choctaw, 1825 • Creeks, 1825 • Osage, 1825 • Kansas, 1825 • Ponca, 1825 • Teton, etc., 1825 • Sioune and Oglala Tribes, 1825 • Cheyenne Tribe, 1825 • Hunkpapa Band of the Sioux Tribe, 1825 • Arikara Tribe, 1825 • Belantse-Etoa or Minitarea Tribe, 1825 • Mandan Tribe, 1825 • Crow Tribe, 1825 • Great and Little Osage, 1825 • Kansas, 1825 • Sioux, etc., 1825 •

Oto and Missouri Tribe, 1825 • Pawnee Tribe, 1825 • Makah Tribe, 1825 • Shawnee, 1825 • Creeks, 1826 • Chippewa, 1826 • Potawatomi, 1826 • Miami, 1826 • Chippewa, etc., 1827 • Potawatomi, 1827 • Creeks, 1827 • Miami, 1828 • Western Cherokee, 1828 • Winnebago, etc., 1828 • Potawatomi, 1828 • Chippewa, etc., 1829 • Winnebago, 1829 • Delawares, 1829 • Delawares, 1829

1830-1839

Treaty with the Sauk and Foxes, etc., 1830 • Choctaw, 1830 • Chickasaw, 1830 • Menominee, 1831 • Menominee, 1831 • Seneca, 1831 • Seneca, etc., 1831 • Shawnee, 1831 • Ottawa, 1831 • Wyandot, 1832 • Creeks, 1832 • Seminole, 1832 • Winnebago, 1832 • Sauk and Foxes, 1832 • Appalachicola Band, 1832 • Potawatomi, 1832 • Chickasaw, 1832 • Chickasaw, 1832 • Kickapoo, 1832 • Shawnee, etc., 1832 • Potawatomi, 1832 • Kaskaskia, etc., 1832 • Menominee, 1832 • Piankashaw and Wea, 1832 • Seneca and Shawnee, 1832 • Western Cherokee, 1833 • Creeks, 1833 • Ottawa, 1833 • Seminole, 1833 • Quapaw, 1833 • Appalachicola Band, 1833 • Oto and Missouri, 1833 • Chippewa, etc., 1833 • Pawnee, 1833 • Chickasaw, 1834 • Miami, 1834 • Potawatomi, 1834 • Potawatomi, 1834 • Caddo, 1835 • Comanche, etc., 1835 • Cherokee, 1835 • Potawatomi, 1836 • Ottawa, etc., 1836 • Potawatomi, 1836 • Potawatomi, 1836 • Potawato-

mi, 1836 • Potawatomi, 1836 • Wyandot, 1836 • Chippewa, 1836 • Potawatomi, 1836 • Menominee, 1836 • Sioux, 1836 • Iowa, etc., 1836 • Potawatomi, 1836 • Potawatomi, 1836 • Potawatomi, 1836 • Potawatomi, 1836 • Sauk and Fox Tribe, 1836 • Sauk and Foxes, 1836 • Sauk and Foxes, 1836 • Oto, etc., 1836 • Sioux, 1836 • Chippewa, 1837 • Choctaw and Chickasaw, 1837 • Potawatomi, 1837 • Kiowa, 1837 • Chippewa, 1837 • Sioux, 1837 • Sauk and Foxes, 1837 • Yankton Sioux, 1837 • Sauk and Foxes, 1837 • Winnebago, 1837 • Iowa, 1837 • Chippewa, 1837 • New York Indians, 1838 • Chippewa, 1838 • Oneida, 1838 • Iowa, 1838 • Miami, 1838 • Creeks, 1838 • Osage, 1839 • Chippewa, 1839 • Stockbridge and Munsee, 1839

1840-1849

Treaty with the Miami, 1840 • Wyandot, 1842 • Seneca, 1842 • Chippewa, 1842 • Sauk and Foxes, 1842 • Creeks and Seminole, 1845 • Kansas Tribe, 1846 • Comanche, Aionai, Anadarko, Caddo, etc., 1846 • Potawatomi Nation, 1846 • Cherokee, 1846 • Winnebago, 1846 • Chippewa of the Mississippi and Lake Superior, 1847 • Pillager Band of Chippewa Indians, 1847 • Pawnee-Grand, Loups, Republicans, etc., 1848 • Menominee, 1848 • Stockbridge Tribe, 1848 • Navaho, 1849 • Utah, 1849

1850-1859

Treaty with the Wyandot, 1850 • Sioux-Sisseton and Wahpeton Bands, 1851 • Sioux-Mdevakanton

and Wahpakoota Bands, 1851 • Fort Laramie with Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapaho, etc., 1851 • Chickasaw, 1852 • Apache, 1852 • Comanche, Kiowa, and Plains Apache, 1853 • Rogue River, 1853 • Umpqua-Cow Creek Band, 1853 • Oto and Missouri, 1854 • Omaha, 1854 • Delawares, 1854 • Shawnee, 1854 • Menominee, 1854 • Iowa, 1854 • Sauk and Foxes of Missouri, 1854 • Kickapoo, 1854 • Kaskaskia, Peoria, etc., 1854 • Miami, 1854 • Creeks, 1854 • Chippewa, 1854 • Choctaw and Chickasaw, 1854 • Rogue River, 1854 • Chasta, etc., 1854 • Umpqua and Kalapuya, 1854 • Confederated Oto and Missouri, 1854 • Nisqualli, Puyallup, etc., 1854 • Kalapuya, etc., 1855 • Dwamish, Suquamish, etc., 1855 • S'kallam, 1855 • Wyandot, 1855 • Makah, 1855 • Chippewa, 1855 • Winnebago, 1855 • Wallawalla, Cayuse, etc., 1855 • Yakima, 1855 • Nez Perce, 1855 • Choctaw and Chickasaw, 1855 • Tribes of Middle Oregon, 1855 • Quinalt, etc., 1855 • Flatheads, etc., 1855 • Ottawa and Chippewa, 1855 • Chippewa of Sault Ste. Marie, 1855 • Chippewa of Saginaw, etc., 1855 • Blackfeet, 1855 • Molala, 1855 • Stockbridge and Munsee, 1856 • Menominee, 1856 • Creeks, etc., 1856 • Pawnee, 1857 • Seneca, Tonawanda Band, 1857 • Ponca, 1858 • Yankton Sioux, 1858 • Sioux, 1858 • Sioux, 1858 • Winnebago, 1859 • Chippewa, etc., 1859 • Sauk and Foxes, 1859 • Kansas, 1859

1860-1869

Treaty with the Delawares, 1860 • Fort Wise with Arapaho and Cheyenne, 1861 • Sauk and Foxes,

etc., 1861 • Delawares, 1861 • Potawatomi, 1861 • Kansas Indians, 1862 • Ottawa of Blanchard's Fork and Roche de Boeur, 1862 • Kickapoo, 1862 • Chippewa of the Mississippi and the Pillager and Lake Winnibigoshish Bands, 1863 • Nez Perce, 1863 • Eastern Shoshoni, 1863 • Shoshoni—Northwestern Bands, 1863 • Western Shoshoni, 1863 • Chippewa—Red Lake and Pembina Bands, 1863 • Utah—Teguache Band, 1863 • Shoshoni-Goship, 1863 • Chippewa—Red Lake and Pembina Bands, 1864 • Chippewa, Mississippi, and Pillager and Lake Winnibigoshish Bands, 1864 • Klamath, etc., 1864 • Chippewa of Saginaw, Swan Creek, and Black River, 1864 • Omaha, 1865 • Winnebago, 1865 • Ponca, 1865 • Snake, 1865 • Osage, 1865 • Sioux—Minicongjou Band, 1865 • Sioux—Lower Brule Band, 1865 • Little Arkansas with Cheyenne and Arapaho, 1865 • Confederated tribes of Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Apache, 1865 • Comanche and Kiowa, 1865 • Sioux—Two-Kettle Band, 1865 • Blackfeet Sioux, 1865 • Sioux—Sans Arc Band, 1865 • Sioux—Hunkpapa Band, 1865 • Sioux—Yanktonai Band, 1865 • Sioux—Upper Yanktonai Band, 1865 • Sioux—Oglala Band, 1865 • Middle Oregon Tribes, 1865 • Seminole, 1866 • Potawatomi, 1866 • Chippewa—Bois Fort Band, 1866 • Choctaw and Chickasaw, 1866 • Creeks, 1866 • Delawares, 1866 • Cherokee, 1866 • Sauk and Foxes, 1867 • Sioux—Sisseton and Wahpeton Bands, 1867 • Seneca, Mixed Seneca and Shawnee, Quapaw, etc., 1867 • Potawatomi, 1867 • Chippewa of the Mississip-

pi, 1867 • Kiowa and Comanche, 1867 • Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache, 1867 • Medicine Lodge with Cheyenne and Arapaho, 1867 • Ute, 1868 • Cherokee, 1868 • Sioux—Brule, Oglala, Minicongjou, Yanktonai, Hunkpapa, Blackfeet, Cuthead, Two Kettle, Sans Arcs, and Santee—and Arapaho, 1868 • Crows, 1868 • Northern Cheyenne and Northern Arapaho, 1868 • Navaho, 1868 • Eastern Band Shoshoni and Bannock, 1868 • Nez Perce, 1868

1870-1890

Agreement with the Sisseton and Wahpeton Bands of Sioux Indians, 1872 • Amended Agreement with Certain Sioux Indians, 1873 • Agreement with the Crows, 1880 • Agreement with the Sioux of Various Tribes, 1882-83 • Agreement with the Columbia and Colville, 1883

Note: After 1871, negotiations between the United States and Indian tribes were called "agreements." The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that, for the most part, agreements are the same as treaties under the law.

This buffalo hide records Cheyenne history. It was taken by a 7th U.S. Cavalry officer in the aftermath of the attack.

DENVER MUSEUM OF NATURE AND SCIENCE

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Visiting the Park

Washita Battlefield National Historic Site is on Okla. 47A, two miles west of Cheyenne, Okla. Cheyenne is located on U.S. 283 about 30 miles north of I-40 and about 20 miles east of the Texas border. Park headquarters and visitor center are in shared facilities with the Black Kettle National Grassland District Office, located one mile west of Cheyenne at the junction of Okla. 47 and 47A. A self-guiding trail and overlook are open daily from sunrise to sunset.

Food, lodging, RV parks, gasoline, and services are available in Cheyenne and nearby communities. Camping, fishing, and hiking trails are available in the Black Kettle National Grassland.

For information contact www.nps.gov/waba or the following:
Cheyenne Chamber of Commerce 580-497-3318
USFS, Black Kettle National Grassland 580-497-2143
Elk City Chamber of Commerce 580-225-0207
Sayre Chamber of Commerce 580-928-3386
Hammon City Hall 580-473-2281

Washita Battlefield National Historic Site



Regulations and Safety
Please stay on the designated trail. The trail is designed for foot travel only; no pets, bicycles, horses, or motorized vehicles are allowed. All animals, plants, and artifacts are protected; do not disturb, damage, or remove them from the

park. Please be careful of ticks and poisonous snakes.

Washita Battlefield is one of over 390 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about parks and National Park Service programs please visit www.nps.gov.

More Information
Washita Battlefield National Historic Site
Rt 1 Box 55A
Cheyenne, OK 73628
580-497-2742
www.nps.gov/waba
35 36.99min N / 99 41.193min W

Washita Battlefield today. Custer watched the progress of the attack from the knoll in the right foreground. Black Kettle's village was near the treeline at left.

WESTERN HISTORY COLLECTIONS