

"The past is never dead. It's not even past."
William Faulkner

The Civil War in the West: A History Vacation Itinerary through Northeast New Mexico and Southeast Colorado

**Santa Fe National Historic Trail
Pecos National Historical Park and Glorieta Battlefield
Fort Union National Monument
Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site
Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site**

This vacation itinerary through Civil War history begins at Santa Fe, New Mexico, and follows the Santa Fe National Historic Trail to the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site in Colorado. It takes travelers through five beautiful and diverse National Park units and extraordinary open landscapes. It unveils a two-year story about the Civil War that changed the course of history for the American West, and especially for American Indians.

Travel by car:

Follow Interstate 25 from Santa Fe, NM, to US Hwy 350 at Trinidad, CO, to US 50 at La Junta, CO, to US Hwy 287 near Lamar, CO, to CO 96 to Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site, approximately 400 miles, total 8 hours of driving.

Distances/driving times:

Santa Fe, NM, to Pecos National Historical Park, NM: 35 miles, 45 minutes
Pecos National Historical Park, NM, to Fort Union National Monument, NM: 71 miles, 1 hour 30 minutes
Fort Union National Monument, NM, to Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site, CO: 205 miles, 4 hours
Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site, CO, to Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site, CO: 72 miles, 1 hour, 30 minutes

Travel by rail:

Amtrak Southwest Chief, from Lamy, NM, to Lamar, CO, daily, 7 ½ hours. To reserve your seat:
www.amtrak.com.

Overnight Accommodations/Dining:

Santa Fe, NM: www.santafe.org
Las Vegas, NM: www.lasvegasnewmexico.com
Trinidad, CO: www.historictrinidad.com/tourism
La Junta, CO: www.visitlajunta.net
Lamar, CO: www.lamarchamber.com
Eads, CO: www.colorado.com/cities-and-towns/eads

Spend a day or a week along the Old Santa Fe Trail discovering the amazing Civil War history of this big open country.

Find your way to Santa Fe - capital of New Mexico, ancient City Different, market terminus of the historic Santa Fe Trail. Stay the night; enjoy famous New Mexican cuisine, fabulous art, Native Pueblo and Hispanic cultures and unforgettable scenery.

Get up early the next morning and catch the legendary Southwest Chief at Amtrak's station in Lamy, NM, 18 miles south of Santa Fe, or drive North on Interstate 25, a modern four-lane highway overlaying much of the historic Santa Fe Trail. Follow I-25 over Glorieta Pass to your first stop at Pecos National Historical Park and Glorieta Battlefield, where Union volunteers and U.S. Army Regulars from Colorado and New Mexico turned back Confederate troops (Texas Volunteers) in March 1862, thwarting the South's ambition to control the Southwest.

Continue north on I-25 through the small city of Las Vegas, New Mexico, to Fort Union National Monument, where Colorado troops rested before marching to Glorieta Pass to join the New Mexico units. Together they defeated Confederate forces who intended to capture strategic Fort Union, then move on to Colorado Territory and the wealth of its gold fields.

Leaving the serene ruins and memories of Fort Union, continue to drive north on I-25. You will be following the Santa Fe Trail's Mountain Route over Raton Pass and across the New Mexico-Colorado state line to the old mining town of Trinidad, CO. At Trinidad, the Mountain Route leaves I-25 and follows US Highway 350. Take Hwy 350 heading northeast, through the Comanche National Grasslands to the agricultural town of La Junta, where the route joins US Highway 50. At La Junta, turn north onto Colorado Highway 109 to Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site. The thriving fur trade forts established by brothers Charles and William Bent were serving very different purposes by the time of the Civil War. Fort Lyon (formerly Fort Wise), from which Colorado soldiers launched their infamous massacre at Sand Creek, occupied a site below what had been Bent's New Fort. The U.S. Army leased the new fort as an adjunct to Fort Lyon, and it served as the Fort's commissary and Quartermaster's building.

From the faithfully reconstructed Bent's Old Fort, drive back to US 50 and continue eastward. You may want to stop for a visit at the site of Bent's New Fort and the original Fort Lyon, about 25 miles east of Las Animas. You can view the location of Fort Lyon from the ruins of Bent's New Fort on a beautiful bluff above the Arkansas River. Continue east on U.S. 50 another six or seven miles and turn north onto U.S. Hwy 287. A few miles east of Eads, turn right onto CO 96 to the near ghost town of Chivington and turn north again onto CR 54, White Antelope Way. Drive approximately eight miles to the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site. There, in the pre-dawn hours of November 29, 1864, Col. John M. Chivington, Expedition Commander of the 1st and 3rd Regiment Cavalry troops Colorado (U.S.) Volunteers, who had achieved fame in 1862 at the Battle of Glorieta Pass, led a detachment of 700 Colorado Volunteers to attack the peaceful village of Cheyenne and Arapaho camped under an American flag and a white flag of peace. The village included approximately 150 lodges of several clan and family groups, approximately 750 Cheyenne and Arapaho people. The soldiers killed, scalped and mutilated about 200 of them, mostly women, children and elders, including a majority of the tribes' peace chiefs.

Santa Fe National Historic Trail

"There is such independence, so much free uncontaminated air, which impregnates the mind, the feelings, nay every thought, with purity. I breathe free without that oppression and uneasiness felt in the gossiping groups of a settled home."
Susan Shelby Magoffin, one of the first white women to emigrate on the Santa Fe Trail, 1846



In 1821, Mexico won independence from Spain, and American trade with the lucrative Santa Fe market began. The Santa Fe Trail followed the general direction of earlier travelers – Indians, Spanish explorers and French traders – from Missouri to Santa Fe.

American merchant caravans rutted the soon-to-be heavily traveled route with two branches. The shorter Cimarron Route, crossing the Arkansas and Cimarron Rivers and cutting through the northwest corner of present day Oklahoma's panhandle, was the route of choice, bearing about two-thirds of the trail's traffic. In the 1830's Charles and William Bent and Ceran St. Vrain of St. Louis established Bent's Fort on the Arkansas River for the Indian and fur trade, and the Mountain Route, sometimes called the Bent's Fort or Raton Route, came into use. Travelers using the Mountain Route avoided the dry stretches of country and the Comanches, but after leaving Bent's Fort, they had to negotiate the dreaded Raton Pass before rejoining the Cimarron Route near present day Watrous, NM. The Trail then headed west past the ruins of Pecos Pueblo, over Glorieta Pass and into Santa Fe.

Both branches of the Santa Fe Trail crossed Native homelands, including Cheyenne, Arapaho, Comanche, Kiowa, Pawnee, northern Pueblos, Jicarilla Apache and Ute, and the habitat of vast herds of bison, elk, antelope and deer.

By the 1840's, Santa Fe traders were hauling more than 6,000 pounds of goods per wagon in Conestogas pulled by ox or mule teams. The economic value of transported merchandise was approximately \$15,000 in 1822, \$45,000 just before the Mexican War, and a whopping \$5 million by the mid 1850's. From 1846 to 1860, starting with the Mexican American War, much of those goods were military supplies, as well as dry goods, staples, hardwood, cured meats and grains.

Following the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, which ended the U.S. war with Mexico and ceded a vast portion of Mexico's northern territory to the United States, the U.S. government established military posts and regular mail service along the Trail. Stagecoach travel began in 1850.

In the 1870's, the southern route of the Transcontinental Railroad stretched across the Trail's route, and in 1880 the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway arrived in Santa Fe. The era of the great freight wagons was over.

But much of the original trail and its landmarks remain today, and in 1987, Congress designated the Santa Fe National Historic Trail – more than 1,000 miles long and crossing five states – as one of

nineteen national historic trails in the National Trails System. The National Park Service administers the Trail through partnerships with private owners, public agencies and various organizations.

For more information about the Santa Fe National Historic Trail: www.nps.gov/safe or 505.988.6098.

For more information about the American Indians whose traditional lands are part of the Santa Fe Trail:

Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes: <http://www.c-a-tribes.org>
Northern Cheyenne Nation: <http://www.cheyennenation.com/>
Northern Arapaho Tribe: <http://www.northernarapaho.com/>
Kiowa Tribe: <http://www.kiowatribe.org/>
Comanche Nation of Oklahoma: <http://www.comanchenation.com/>
Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma: <http://www.pawneenation.org/>
Southern Ute Indian Tribe: <http://www.southern-ute.nsn.us/>
Ute Mountain Ute Tribe: www.utemountainute.com/
Jicarilla Apache Nation: <http://www.jicarilla.net>
Pueblo of Jemez and Pueblo of Pecos: www.jemezpuablo.com

Pecos National Historical Park/Glorieta Battlefield

A Confederate West – Grand Design or Delusion?
Pecos National Historical Park Interpretive Sign



Embracing at least 10,000 years of human history, Pecos National Historical Park lies 25 miles southeast of Santa Fe, just off Interstate 25. The modern highway's blacktop obscures the Santa Fe Trail's ancient tracks over Glorieta Pass and through the green and beautiful Pecos Valley.

Traveling north on I-25, take exit 299, the Pecos-Glorieta interchange. Go east on NM 50 to the town of Pecos, then south on NM 63 two miles to the park. Stop at the E.E. Fogelson Visitor Center for information, a park film and extensive and informative exhibits. The park also offers guided tours, a 1.25 mile self-guiding trail through the pueblo and mission church ruins, and a 2.25 mile hiking trail through the Glorieta Civil War Battlefield.

The Upper Pecos Valley is bounded by the 10,000 ft. Sangre de Cristo Mountains to the north, broad and steep Glorieta Mesa, also known as Rowe, Mesa to the south, the Great Plains to the east and the fertile Rio Grande Valley to the west. Around 6,000 BC, nomadic hunters settled down, and the pit houses of small family groups began to dot the area. By 800 BC, the valley had been settled by ancestral Puebloans, who developed a complex social, religious and public life.

In the early 1400's AD, the population concentrated in one place and built the great Pueblo of Pecos. The massive structure was a terraced fortress, five stories high with 20 kivas and more than 600 rooms that housed 2,000 people. It dominated the region for 250 years.

Located strategically at the eastern edge of the Puebloan world, Pecos was a crossroads of cultures and one of history's great trade centers. The people were farmers who brokered corn and other produce, turquoise, cotton cloth, pottery, obsidian and other goods for buffalo robes and meat, tallow, flint and other weaponry with Apaches to the south and later Comanches from the Plains.

When Spanish conquistadors arrived at Pecos, the great pueblo was in its prime. Seeking the mythical Seven Cities of Gold, Francisco Vasquez de Coronado reached Pecos in 1540, and so began a centuries-long relationship between the two cultures that alternated between peace and war. Failing to find gold, Coronado left the area without establishing any permanent Spanish settlements.

Don Juan de Onate led the Spanish back to Pecos in 1598, claiming the land for Spain and bringing Franciscan priests to convert the people to Christianity.

In the 100 years from 1617 to 1717, the Franciscans built four churches at Pecos. The first, or "Lost Church," was never completed. There is little remaining trace of the second church. However, the third church was built to make a statement. It was enormous, made of 300,000 adobe bricks and covering 6,000 square feet. It rose 55 feet in height and was the largest church in all of New Spain. Such a

structure and the religion it represented stood in dominance over Pecos's many kivas with their focus on the rhythms and harmony of Nature. The colossal church towered over Pecos for more than 50 years.

By the mid-1600's, Spanish economic demands had put historic trade patterns into chaos, and severe droughts had created famine. In 1680, during the Pueblo Revolt, the northern Pueblos united in an historic effort to throw the invaders off their lands. The people of Pecos killed the Spanish priest, set fire to the great church and toppled its thick walls.

The Spanish fled but returned a dozen years later. With less repressive policies and frequent intermarriage, the two cultures began to draw closer together. In 1717, the Franciscans built their fourth and final church, a smaller structure, upon the foundation of the destroyed third church. It is the ruin of this fourth church that stands today at Pecos National Historical Park.

By 1717, the population of Pecos was in decline – victim to famine, European diseases, and a new threat of Comanche raids from the Plains. By the time international trade via the Santa Fe Trail began in the early 1800's, Hispanic families had colonized the lands around Pecos Pueblo and established towns along the Pecos River.

By 1838, the last survivors of the great Pecos Pueblo had moved across the mountains to live with their Towa kinsmen at Jemez Pueblo. Today, they still maintain their ancient cultural and religious practices and make frequent pilgrimages to their ancestral Pecos homeland and sacred places.

Many travelers in the heyday of the Santa Fe Trail visited the great pueblo's ruins, among them soldiers who fought in the Mexican and Civil Wars.

When the Civil War began and the State of Texas joined the Confederacy, the South set its sights on America's Southwest. New Mexico Territory was hotly contested as a necessary route to the California gold mines and seaports. In 1861, Lt. Col. John R. Baylor led the 2nd Texas Mounted Rifles into southern New Mexico Territory and proclaimed it to be the new Confederate Territory of Arizona.

In response, the Governor of New Mexico Territory Henry Connelly, whose wife was from a prominent Hispanic family, called out the Territorial militia to defend the Union.

Early in 1862, Confederate Brigadier General Henry Hopkins Sibley led his Texas troops northward from El Paso and Mesilla deeper into New Mexico Territory. Union Colonel Edward R.S. Canby, whose headquarters were at Fort Craig, New Mexico Territory, led the 1st New Mexico Infantry, including Hispanic Volunteers under command of J. Francisco Chaves and Christopher "Kit" Carson, from Fort Union in northeast New Mexico, to engage Sibley at Valverde. Sibley's forces won that battle and continued northward along the Rio Grande River, capturing Santa Fe and advancing along the Santa Fe Trail, hoping to take Fort Union and its supply depot. Control of Fort Union would give the South an uncontested path to the gold mines of Colorado and the wealth to sustain Confederate efforts.

At the same time, 1,000 volunteers of the 1st Colorado Infantry – "Pikes Peakers" – under command of Colonel John P. Slough, who had marched 400 miles from Denver City, through mountain passes, snow and wind to Fort Union, now stepped up their pace to stop Sibley.

In March 1862, the two armies encountered each other, first at Apache Canyon, then at Pigeon's Ranch below Glorieta Pass, above the ruins of Pecos Pueblo. The remains of Pigeon's Ranch, a roadhouse catering to Santa Fe Trail travelers in the 1860's, can still be seen today.

The battle raged inconclusively for three days, with high casualties on both sides. The deciding action took place on March 28 on the west side of Glorieta Pass at Apache Cañon. A band of Union troops,

under command of Major John M. Chivington, were led across Glorieta Mesa by Lt. Colonel Manuel Chavez to successfully attack and destroy the Confederate supply train. Chivington ordered his men to burn the wagons, kill all 600 or more horses and mules and threatened to kill his Confederate prisoners. The Texans were forced to abandon the fight and retreat to Santa Fe.

The Battle of Glorieta, often called the “Gettysburg of the West,” ended the Confederacy’s incursion into the Southwest and its hopes of reaching California.

Though several others, including Lt. Colonel Manuel Chavez, Captain William H. Lewis and Captain Asa B. Carey, may legitimately be called the heroes of the Union victory, Major John M. Chivington claimed that distinction for himself. A fire and brimstone abolitionist and Methodist preacher, Chivington had been a zealous fixture around Denver City and the mountain mining camps before joining the Union cause. People called him the “Fighting Parson.” He was a big man, ambitious and remorseless. After Glorieta, now as Colonel Chivington, he returned to Denver and was appointed Commanding Officer of the U.S. Military District of Colorado. Before the end of the Civil War, he would become disgraced for leading the 1864 massacre of 200 peaceful Cheyennes and Arapahoes at Sand Creek, Colorado Territory.

President Lyndon B. Johnson established Pecos National Monument in 1965, and Congress bestowed National Historical Park status in 1990. The new status expanded the park from 400 acres to more than 6,500. Actress Greer Garson and husband E.E. Fogelson’s Forked Lightning Ranch was added to the park, as was the Glorieta Battlefield and other Civil War landmarks.

Neither Pecos National Historical Park, nor the Village of Pecos has overnight lodging, but camping is available in the Santa Fe National Forest. Call the Pecos District Ranger Station for information, 505.757.6121.

For more information about Pecos National Historical Park and Glorieta Battlefield:
www.nps.gov/peco, 505.757.7241.

For more information about the American Indians whose histories and cultures are entwined with Pecos:

Comanche Nation of Oklahoma: <http://www.comanchenation.com/>
Pueblo of Jemez and Pueblo of Pecos: www.jemezpueblo.com

Fort Union National Monument

*“...orders were received...for every officer and soldier who could be spared to leave at sunrise....
As the regiment left, the band, following the usual custom, escorted them out of the garrison
quite a distance, playing The Girl I Left Behind Me, which started many a tear to flow.”
Genevieve La Tourrette, daughter of Fort Union Chaplain, 1870's*



Upon leaving Pecos National Historical Park, continue to follow the Santa Fe Trail by driving north on I-25 through the small city of Las Vegas, NM. Las Vegas enjoyed its prosperity as a stop on the Santa Fe Railway, when the Fred Harvey Company's grand hotel, La Casteñada, welcomed visitors to the Southwest. With the decline of the passenger trains, the beautiful hotel closed its doors in 1948 and now stands in ruins beside the tracks. Sixty-six years later, in 2014, entrepreneurs purchased La Casteñada and began refurbishing it to a new era of five-star hospitality. In the meantime, other excellent hotel accommodations, as well as delicious New Mexican cuisine and other services, may be found in Las Vegas.

Leaving Las Vegas, follow I-25 approximately 28 miles north to exit 366 at Watrous, NM. Go west on NM Hwy 161 to the entrance to Fort Union National Monument.

During the summer, park personnel offer interpretive talks, guided tours and living history programs. Self-guided interpretive trails of 1.25 miles and .5 mile enable visitors to tour the ruins on their own. On the parade ground at sunset you can almost still hear a bugler sounding Taps.

Merchant travel between the westward facing American world of Missouri and the Nuevo Mexico capitol at Santa Fe had been growing for 25 years since Mexico won independence from Spain in 1821. In 1846, the U.S. declared war on Mexico, and General Stephen Watts Kearny led the Army of the West down the Santa Fe Trail from Fort Leavenworth to capture Santa Fe. He established Fort Marcy on a hill overlooking the town and promised New Mexicans that, in return for their allegiance to the United States, the Army would protect them from Indians and other enemies.

Headquartered at Fort Marcy, the U.S. Army in New Mexico soon grew to over 1,300 soldiers stationed in small detachments among New Mexico towns. This arrangement was expensive and ineffective. The Indians were not in the towns but out in the countryside attacking merchant caravans and trying to rid their lands of increasing traffic on the Santa Fe Trail.

In 1851, Secretary of War C.M. Conrad, frustrated by the situation, ordered Lt. Colonel Edwin V. Sumner to take over command in New Mexico and revise the territory's defense system. Disdaining Santa Fe as "that sink of vice and extravagance," Sumner broke up the village posts and moved the headquarters and supply depot to New Mexico's eastern frontier. He chose a broad valley 100 miles away with abundant timber, grazing range and water, near the junction of the Mountain and Cimarron Routes of the Santa Fe Trail.

In order to save money, Sumner used soldiers rather than skilled laborers to hastily erect the first Fort Union. Built of uncured logs, the 30 or so buildings covering approximately 80 acres began to shrink and decay almost immediately. The logs also became infested with bed bugs.

Following the 1849 discovery of gold in California, westbound traffic on the Santa Fe Trail increased, and conflicts with the tribes escalated during the 1850's. Soldiers at Fort Union fought Indians in all directions – Utes to the northwest, Jicarilla Apaches to the north and northwest, Kiowas and Comanches on the Plains, all determined to protect their traditional territories from being overrun.

Isolated skirmishes escalated to full-scale military offensives, sometimes led by famed scout Kit Carson. On Christmas Eve 1854 a group of Utes and Jicarillas attacked the people at Fort El Pueblo in what became known as the Fort Pueblo Massacre (near present day Pueblo, CO). Fort Union sent troops to chase the Indians around in the bitter cold and deep snow, subduing them by 1855.

As traffic on the Santa Fe Trail continued to increase, Comanches and Kiowas were making the route more dangerous. As early as 1851, while Fort Union was still under construction, Captain James H. Carleton led Company K, First Dragoons on regular patrols of the Mountain Route as far as the Arkansas River. After 1852, military escorts sometimes accompanied the armed merchant caravans and passenger stagecoaches, and Fort Union's mission remained focused on protecting the trade route.

From 1859 to early 1861, Fort Union soldiers pursued Comanches and Kiowas up and down both the Mountain and Cimarron Routes, attacking and burning villages and claiming victory as far away as the Cimarron River in the present day Oklahoma Panhandle. Then, Fort Union's commanders began a relentless new pursuit of the Mescalero Apaches in central and southern New Mexico Territory.

These hostilities subsided, however, in 1861 as Fort Union was forced to redirect its attention toward the looming outbreak of Civil War. Both North and South sentiments ran high at Fort Union. When war came, a number of Fort Union's officers resigned to join the Confederate Army, among them Major Henry H. Sibley, the fort's last pre-war commander.

Sibley convinced Confederate President Jefferson Davis that the South could take New Mexico Territory and Fort Union and possibly advance into California and Colorado – making the coveted Southwest a province of the Confederacy. Davis promoted Sibley to brigadier general and sent him to Texas to recruit volunteers and launch his offensive.

Colonel Edward R.S. Canby, commander of the U.S. Army in New Mexico, promptly moved troops south on the Rio Grande to counter Sibley's threat. Military supplies poured into Fort Union over the Santa Fe Trail from Fort Leavenworth, a journey that took around three months. The new commander of Fort Union, Major William Chapman began recruiting New Mexico volunteers to fill the void left by the departing soldiers and also began construction of a more defensive second Fort Union – the Star Fort.

By 1861, Fort Union's log buildings were in serious and dangerous decay. Chapman also surmised that Confederate artillery fired from the bluffs to the west could easily reach targets within the fort. He decided to abandon the first Fort Union and sited its replacement farther to the east, commencing construction of an earthen fortification shaped like an eight-point star and intended to be mortar proof. Unfortunately, the Star Fort also was built of green logs by unskilled soldier carpenters. Partly below grade, the unventilated rooms were damp and the floors turned to mud during rainstorms. To avoid such unhealthy misery, most of the troops chose to sleep in tents outside the Fort's walls.

In January and February of 1862, during construction of the Star Fort, Sibley's Texas Volunteers advanced up the Rio Grande, capturing Albuquerque and Santa Fe and reaching Glorieta Pass, barely 80 miles west of Fort Union. If Fort Union fell, the Confederates would have a clear march to Denver and the wealth produced by Colorado's gold and silver mines.

As the Texans approached, a regiment of the 1st Colorado Infantry, under command of Colonel John P. Slough, moved southward from Denver, at an epic rate of 40 miles a day, and reached Fort Union on March 11. Slough took command of the Fort's troops and New Mexico Volunteers and marched them onward to Glorieta. He met the Confederate forces at the Battle of Apache Cañon on March 26. On March 28, a decisive strike by the "Pike's Peakers" on the Confederate supply train at Glorieta Pass sent the Southern troops into retreat back to Texas, reversing the Confederacy's conquest of the Southwest.

With the Confederate threat dissipated, Canby relinquished command of the Department of New Mexico to James H. Carleton, now a brigadier general of the California Volunteers, and went back east to fight. In November 1862, Carleton abandoned the Star Fort and ordered construction of a third Fort Union.

The third and final fort was not built of green logs. Instead, Carleton ordered it constructed in the New Mexico Territorial style of adobe bricks. It included the post of Fort Union, quartermaster's depot, ordnance depot, stockade, hospital, bakery, chapel corals and other functions. It was the largest military establishment in New Mexico, designed to house four companies and serve as the regional supply center for smaller military posts in New Mexico and Arizona Territories. It took six years to build and was completed in 1869.

During the final years of the Civil War, while the third Fort Union was under construction, most of the regular troops were called east to fight. New Mexico Volunteers, primarily Hispanics, along with California, Colorado and Kansas Volunteers and U.S. Army Regulars, were recruited to take their places. Historic conflicts between Diné (Navajos) and Hispanics rekindled with the departure of regular soldiers, and the Diné, Mescaleros, Comanches and Kiowas revived hopes of reclaiming their homelands by escalating raids along the Santa Fe Trail. For the remainder of the Civil War, the volunteer regiments of Fort Union campaigned almost exclusively and ceaselessly against the Indians. Carleton's orders were to kill all Indian men and take all women and children prisoner. He built a new installation, Fort Sumner on the Pecos River near Bosque Redondo, 160 miles southeast of Santa Fe, to hold Indian prisoners. He ordered Colonel Kit Carson into Mescalero country and Lt. Colonel J. Francisco Chavez into Navajo country to round them up.

Carson subdued the Mescaleros, killing several of their leaders, and the survivors were forced onto the Fort Sumner reservation at Bosque Redondo.

Before and during the Civil War, Diné, or Navajo, warriors raided freely across what are now the states of Arizona and New Mexico, stealing thousands of horses and other livestock. Frustrated, and ruthless, Carleton pressed for absolute extermination of the tribe or complete isolation. He issued an ultimatum – surrender peacefully and move to Bosque Redondo by July 20, 1863. The Diné did not surrender, and Carleton ordered Carson and Chavez into their homeland.

Carson led 740 troops, regular Army, New Mexico and California Volunteers, and a band of Ute scouts. Chavez led an additional 330 men into the heart of Diné territory. No large battles were fought. Rather, U.S. forces waged a series of smaller attacks, looting and burning grain fields, stealing livestock and systematically starving the Navajos.

Canyon de Chelly in northeast Arizona was the heart of Diné homeland, abundant and protective. According to Diné oral history, in the months before Carson's approach, tribal leaders learned of and began preparing for the coming onslaught. They stockpiled supplies, blankets, shelter, dried food and water and chose a place to hide. Fortress Rock is an 800 ft. high sandstone monolith deep within Canyon de Chelly. The ancient Anasazi had once cut a path of steps and hand holds up its face to the top, where hundreds of people could take refuge, protected by the rock's steep walls and far above the range of enemy fire. The Diné augmented the Anasazi steps with wooden ladders and hauled up their

supplies. In December, about 300 Navajos, including women and children, climbed to the top then pulled the ladders up after them.

In January 1864, Carson led a column into the west entrance to Canyon de Chelly. Captain Albert Pfeiffer led a column into the eastern entrance, forming a pincer in hopes of demoralizing the Navajo. In mid January, Pfeiffer's troops passed under Fortress Rock, unaware of the 300 or so Diné camped on top. Carson later discovered the encampment and sent troops back to Tsaille Creek at the base of the monolith to wait the Indians out. On a moonlit night in February, the people camped on top needed water. They formed a human chain to move down the chiseled footsteps to the creek where American troops were sleeping. About twenty feet above Tsaille Creek, they lowered gourds on yucca ropes into the water and hauled up the small containers of water from person to person to the top.

Nonetheless, from March to June 1864, the exhausted, demoralized and starving Diné steadily surrendered and were force marched to Bosque Redondo, 425 miles from Canyon de Chelly. Many died during the "Long Walk," and many more died at Bosque Redondo. In January 1865, Carleton reported to Washington that nearly 8,400 Navajos were confined to Bosque Redondo, making a total of nearly 9,000 Indians, including the Apaches. But the tiny patch of land was inadequate to sustain them all. The Army had forced too many people into the confined space of Fort Sumner, where food supplies too often failed to arrive. Some Mescaleros escaped the squalid conditions and continued to fight a few more years, but many Navajos starved. Finally, in 1868, after an enormous humanitarian toll, the U.S. Army allowed the Diné to go home.

When the Civil War ended in April 1865 at Appomattox Courthouse, the regular Army returned to Fort Union, and the New Mexico and California Volunteers were mustered out of duty.

After the war, soldiers from Fort Union and other forts throughout the Southwest, including the legendary African American Buffalo Soldiers (the 24th and 25th U.S. Infantry and the 9th and 10th U.S. Cavalry) continued to campaign against Kiowas, Comanches, and Apaches Geronimo and Victorio. They chased Indians east beyond the Oklahoma and Texas Panhandles and south beyond the New Mexico/Texas border. By the 1880's the Southern Plains Indian Wars were virtually over, the people defeated and confined to reservations.

Fort Union's supply depot continued to be strategic until the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway reached Santa Fe on February 9, 1880. Fort Union continued on for another dozen years, with military life stagnating and the beautiful adobe and white pillar colonnades deteriorating, until the Army closed it down for good in 1891. The remaining soldiers marched to Watrous and boarded the train for new posts.

For forty years, Fort Union had borne witness to America's conquest of Native tribes and expansion into the Southwest. Its adobe walls tumbled, leaving mostly the skeletons of brick chimneys where soldiers' families had once carried on bustling frontier lives. In the 1930's a movement began to preserve what was left, and in 1954 President Dwight D. Eisenhower established Fort Union National Monument under the auspices of the National Park Service. Today visitors can imagine the bugles sounding Taps across the empty and serene parade ground.

There is no overnight lodging or camping at Fort Union National Monument, but you can drive back to Las Vegas or continue north on the Santa Fe Trail Mountain Route, I-25, over Raton Pass and into Colorado, stopping for the night at Raton, New Mexico, or the old mining town of Trinidad, Colorado.

For more information about Fort Union National Monument: www.nps.gov/foun, 505.425.8025.

For more information about the American Indians whose lives and culture were affected by Fort Union:

Kiowa Tribe: <http://www.kiowatribe.org/>

Comanche Nation of Oklahoma: <http://www.comanchenation.com/>

Navajo Nation: <http://discovernavajo.com/>

Southern Ute Indian Tribe: <http://www.southern-ute.nsn.us/>

Ute Mountain Ute Tribe: www.utemountainute.com/

Mescalero Apache Tribe (Mescalero, Chiricahua, Lipan): <http://www.mescaleroapache.com/>

Jicarilla Apache Nation: <http://www.jicarilla.net>

Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site

"In fall and winter there was always a large camp of Indians just outside the fort – Cheyennes and Arapahoes, and sometime Sioux, Kiowas, Comanches, and Prairie Apaches. The trade room was full of Indian men and women all day long; others came just to visit and talk, and there was often a circle of chiefs sitting with my father or his partners, smoking and talking."
George Bent, son of William Bent and Owl Woman



Return from Fort Union to Watrous and turn north onto I-25 headed for Trinidad, Colorado, about 92 miles. Take exit 15 and resume your Mountain Route journey east on U.S. Highway 350. Follow U.S. 350 another 80 miles to the small agricultural town of La Junta. You will be driving parallel to the Santa Fe Trail and the railroad tracks that brought the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway to Santa Fe in 1880. The same tracks bring Amtrak passengers to the town of Lamy, New Mexico, a short distance from Santa Fe. You will be driving through ranchlands and open prairie.

About halfway to La Junta, you will traverse the Comanche National Grasslands, rich with ancient petroglyphs and pictographs and abundant with wildlife including lesser prairie chickens, golden eagles, antelope, deer, coyotes, wild turkeys, roadrunners and more. If you have time for a detour, these remote and austere wildlands offer fine opportunities for birding, picnicking, hiking and sunset watching. For more information: <http://fs.usda.gov/goto/psicc/com>.

At La Junta, turn north on Colorado Highway 109 for about a mile, then east on CO 194 for six miles to Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site.

The park offers self-guided tours and a 20-minute documentary film throughout the year. Living history interpreters provide guided tours and demonstrations June 1 through September 1. Bent's Old Fort comes to life during annual events like Frontier Skills Day, Santa Fe Trail Encampment, Kid's Quarters, Old Fashioned Fourth of July, Native American Heritage Day, and the Traditional Holiday Celebration.

The ruins of Bent's New Fort are on private property, but in 2013 landowners opened the site to public visitation. The National Park Service has installed interpretive exhibits and is conducting archeological research into this location, so pivotal to the history of the American West. Check with park staff at Bent's Old Fort for directions to Bent's New Fort. You may visit on your own or join a ranger led interpretive tour. There are no visitor facilities at the new fort.

Charles and William Bent were sons of a prosperous Missouri Supreme Court Justice. They were born to privilege in the era of Lewis & Clark, the fur trade and mountain men, and both adventured west as young men. Ten years older than William, Charles was educated in the East. William received his education primarily in the mountains and rivers of the West. By 1824, Charles at 25 and William at 15 were trapping along the Upper Arkansas River in present day Colorado. In 1829, they brought their own freight wagon train of goods down the Santa Fe Trail to trade in Nuevo Mexico. A year later,

Charles Bent and St. Louis fur trader Ceran St. Vrain, then living in Taos, formed Bent, St. Vrain & Company. Astute businessmen, they opened a store in Taos and soon another one in Santa Fe. William joined the company, and around 1833 oversaw construction of Bent's Fort to expand their lucrative trade with the Plains Indians.

The fort was tactically located for trade on the Arkansas River, which at the time served as the border between the United States and Mexico. It sat 275 miles from Santa Fe and 530 miles from Independence, Missouri, the Trail's eastern point of departure. A short distance upriver, the Mountain Route forded the Arkansas and headed southwest over Raton Pass to Santa Fe.

The Bents constructed their fortress-like "Castle on the Plains" of adobe bricks, made and laid by skilled New Mexican craftsmen. It enclosed a large central plaza and featured two massive corner towers for defense. The fort's lower level housed storerooms, blacksmith, carpenter and gunsmith shops, kitchen, dining room, the Bents' living quarters, laborers quarters and a large trade room. The second level provided living quarters and even a small billiards room. The Bents brought a full sized billiards table from St. Louis in 1836 for the entertainment of fort employees, traders and guests.

The tops of the corral walls, which sometimes contained hundreds of horses and mules, were planted with sharp spined cactus to deter horse thieving.

Bent's Fort traded with Cheyennes and Arapahos from the Southern Plains, but also occasionally with Lakotas from the Northern Plains, Mescaleros from southern New Mexico, Jicarillas from the west, Utes from the mountains, Comanches and Kiowas from the south, and sometimes Blackfeet and Gros Ventre from the upper Missouri River in present day Montana.

By the 1830's the beaver pelt trade was in decline, the plush, overexploited rodents trapped out of the central Rockies, and the Bents primary trade item became buffalo robes from the Plains tribes. For less than three dollars in trade goods, the Bents could acquire a fully tanned buffalo hide to resell in St. Louis for six dollars. Buffalo robes became such a trade staple that the value of any item was often stated in terms of the number of robes it could sell for. In the center of the fort's plaza stood a hide press that compressed the heavy robes into bales of ten for transport eastward, up to 15,000 robes a year during the fort's peak business.

The Bents also traded with the Plains tribes for horses and mules. In return, Bent, St. Vrain and Co. provided the tribes with tobacco, beads, cotton cloth, brass wire, iron, butcher knives, axes, bullets and powder, fire arms and fine woolen blankets. As many as 100 employees lived at Bent's Fort at any given time.

The Bents' hospitality was legendary, and guests dined in luxury while enjoying a welcome rest from their long overland journey. There was even an icehouse and mint juleps. The cannons mounted in the two defense towers were never fired in defense. By all accounts, life at Bent's Fort was contented and boisterous, with near constant noise from blacksmithing, wagon repairs, horses, mules, trading, and dances known locally as "fandangos." The international cacophony included Spanish, French, English and numerous Native languages. Most of the traders spoke multiple tongues.

The fort's best trade customers were the Cheyenne, and they enjoyed especially close relations with the Bents. The tribe often erected their lodges just outside the fort walls and traded freely within. In 1836, William Bent married Owl Woman, daughter of White Thunder, the Cheyenne Keeper of the Sacred Arrows. Their marriage made Bent, in effect, a Cheyenne too. The tribe called him "Little White Man," a name given to him as a youth by the Cheyenne chief Yellow Wolf. After their marriage, William divided his time between Owl Woman's village and business at the fort.

William Bent was a mountain man by age 15 and may have known the land and rivers of the Southern Plains and Rocky Mountains as well as any white man, even the famous Kit Carson. He was commonly respected as a fair trader and arbiter of peaceful relations among tribes and between tribes and traders, both New Mexican and American.

The Bent family knew the Carson family well. During the fort's early years, the Bents employed the young Carson as a hunter, supplying their kitchen with buffalo and other wild game. (The Bents also briefly employed another young hunter during that time – Jean Baptiste Charbonneau, who as an infant was carried by his mother Sacagawea on the Lewis & Clark Expedition.) Later, Charles Bent and Kit Carson married sisters, Ignacia and Josepha Jaramillo of a prosperous Taos family, and both lived with their families in Taos.

In 1844, supported by a citizenry eager for westward expansion, James K. Polk was elected 11th President of the United States and promised to fulfill America's "Manifest Destiny." Polk was an epic and unapologetic land grabber. He aimed to annex California and its Pacific ports, along with all real estate between there and Missouri, including what are now the states of Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and Nevada. At first he tried to purchase this vast area from Mexico, and when his offers were refused, he openly provoked war.

In May 1846, Polk sent General Stephen Watts Kearny to invade and occupy the northern province of Mexico. Kearny marched his 1,657-man "Army of the West" from Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, down the Santa Fe Trail toward Nuevo Mexico and its capital at Santa Fe. He and his men reached Bent's Fort by August.

Kearny convinced William Bent to lead a small reconnaissance troop in advance of his forces until they reached Santa Fe. The Army of the West arrived safely at its destination, and without firing a shot, Kearny captured New Mexico's provincial capital on August 18, 1846. He raised the U.S. flag, and appointed William's brother Charles Bent to the post of first territorial governor.

By January 1847, some New Mexicans and Taos Indians, resenting American occupation, revolted against it. An angry mob broke into Governor Bent's Taos home, brutally killing and mutilating him in front of his wife and children before U.S. forces could regain control.

After Charles Bent's death, William and Ceran St. Vrain continued the fort's trade for another couple of years, but the business's driving force was gone. And by then, the great buffalo herds were moving farther and farther away because of climactic drought cycles, over hunting and early encroachment by immigrants.

In 1849, cholera swept through the fort and decimated several of the Plains tribes, including the Cheyenne. Owl Woman also died that year while giving birth to the couple's fourth child. William subsequently married her sister, Yellow Woman, and together they had one son, whom they named Charles.

Amid such personal family loss, William Bent and Ceran St. Vrain tried to sell the fort to the U.S. Army, but their price was refused. William finally abandoned Bent's Fort by the end of 1849. The once prosperous and exciting trade center was destroyed that same year. Some say Indians burned it to the ground after William's departure. But William and Owl Woman's son George said his father set it afire himself.

For awhile, during the Civil War, some of the fort's ruins were rebuilt and used as a way station for the Barlow & Sanderson Stage Company and later the U.S. Mail. The post office closed in 1873, and by the early 1900's the great trade "Castle on the Plains" was rubble.

After abandoning his old fort, William Bent moved his family about 40 miles downriver to the Bents' Ranch at the mouth of the Purgatoire River, near present day Las Animas. In 1853, he built a new trading fort on a bluff overlooking the Arkansas River, near present day Lamar, CO. In 1860, the U.S. military leased Bent's New Fort for use as a commissary for the new Fort Wise, which was being built ½ mile to the west. The name Fort Wise was changed to Fort Lyon soon after the Civil War began. It was from this original Fort Lyon that troops marched in November 1864 to carry out the infamous Sand Creek Massacre. William Bent's sons, George and Charles, were camped with the Cheyenne at Sand Creek, Colorado Territory, on November 28 when Colonel J.M. Chivington led his pre-dawn attack on the peaceful village.

William Bent served as Indian Agent for a brief year in 1859-1860 and remained an Indian trader until his death in 1869. The famous old trader died at his ranch on the Purgatoire River, one year after his friend Black Kettle, the Cheyenne peace chief who escaped death at Sand Creek, was killed at Washita, Oklahoma Territory, in another pre-dawn massacre, led this time by General George Armstrong Custer.

Ceran St. Vrain moved to Mora, New Mexico Territory, in 1855 and was appointed Colonel of the New Mexico Volunteers to lead troops against the Utes and Apaches. He was also a trader at Fort Union in the mid 1850's. Some say he moved to New York City for a brief period but quickly returned to Mora, where he died in 1870.

Following their abandonment of Bent's Old Fort, both William Bent and Ceran St. Vrain witnessed the U.S. Army's relentless persecution of the Cheyenne, Arapaho and other Plains tribes, whose skilled bartering had enlivened their fort. Within a few years of the partners' deaths, the defeated tribes would be confined to reservations. The Transcontinental Railroad would cross the Southern Plains, and the great buffalo herds would be hunted nearly to extinction.

In the mid 1920's, the Daughters of the American Revolution acquired the site of Bent's Old Fort from the A.E. Reynolds Cattle Company. It was transferred to the Colorado State Historical Society in 1954, then to the National Park Service, which preserved it as Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site in 1960. The Park Service conducted archeological excavations and unearthed thousands of artifacts. Full scale reconstruction began in 1975, using knowledge pieced together from the excavations, letters and diaries of the trading post's many visitors and residents and a particularly helpful description, drawing and accurate measurements made by a young topographical engineer, Lt. James W. Abert. Abert briefly stayed at the fort in 1845 and 1846 while serving in the U.S. Army.

Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site is rich with history of the Santa Fe Trail and the Southwest. The Old and New Forts thrived on the far reaches of the American frontier as centers of a prosperous and peaceful trade with the tribes of the Southern Plains. At the same time, they facilitated the growth of trade, immigration and the U.S. conquest of Mexico that ultimately brought disastrous changes for the region's tribes, lands and great buffalo herds.

Food and overnight lodging are available a few miles from the fort at La Junta, Colorado. For information about visiting Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site: www.nps.gov/beol, 719.383.5010.

For more information on the American Indians whose ancestors' lives were integral to the existence of Bent's forts:

- Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes: <http://www.c-a-tribes.org>
- Northern Cheyenne Nation: <http://www.cheyennenation.com/>
- Northern Arapaho Tribe: <http://www.northernarapaho.com/>
- Kiowa Tribe: <http://www.kiowatribe.org/>
- Comanche Nation of Oklahoma: <http://www.comanchenation.com/>
- Southern Ute Indian Tribe: <http://www.southern-ute.nsn.us/>
- Ute Mountain Ute Tribe: www.utemountainute.com/

Mescalero Apache Tribe (Mescalero, Chiricahua, Lipan): <http://www.mescaleroapache.com/>
Jicarilla Apache Nation: <http://www.jicarilla.net>

Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site

*“Last November was a raid by Hundred Daysers under Colonel Chivington to kill Cheyennes at Sandy Creek. It was murder pure and simple.”
Captain Silas S. Soule, Company D 1st Colorado Cavalry*

*“We pray for the spirits of our Cheyenne and Arapaho ancestors and the Colorado soldiers who died here.”
Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site interpretive sign*



From Bent's Old Fort, drive back to US 50 and continue eastward. About 32 miles beyond Las Animas, leave the Santa Fe Trail Mountain Route and turn north onto US 287 a few miles shy of Lamar, CO. A few miles east of Eads, turn right onto CO 96 to the small townsite of Chivington and turn left at the National Park Service sign onto a gravel road. Drive eight miles to the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site.

This quiet park is a profound, symbolic, spiritual and controversial site unlike any other in America. Here visitors may learn about the massacre from an interpretive ranger, picnic in the trees of the former Dawson ranch, walk to the top of Monument Hill to view where the atrocity happened, look for rare birds, insects, and flora, enjoy the austere High Plains landscape, and, in their own private ways, respect and honor the dead.

In 1849, gold was discovered in California, and the stream of trade caravans on the Santa Fe Trail swelled with gold seekers. The emigrant trains also brought cholera, decimating many Plains tribes and residents of Bent's Fort. The Cheyenne and Arapaho recovered and regrouped, but their resentment of this new kind of white people began to grow, and they began to retaliate.

In an effort to avert conflict, the 1851 Treaty of Fort Laramie guaranteed to the Plains tribes large areas of their traditional lands and provisions to compensate for the growing destruction of buffalo range. It also constrained the tribes from attacking travelers and gave the U.S. military the right to build roads and forts within tribal territory. It gave the Cheyennes control of much of their homelands, specifically the area between the Oregon and Santa Fe Trails in present day Colorado.

Despite the Fort Laramie Treaty, or Horse Creek Treaty as the tribes called it, conflicts between white newcomers and the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, Comanche, Utes, Apaches and Lakota became more frequent during the 1850's. In 1858, gold was discovered in Colorado, and another rush was on. Miners and immigrants encroached more deeply into tribal homelands.

The attitude of the U.S. government toward Natives who were "impeding progress" became increasingly punitive. Soldiers from Fort Union and Fort Kearny, often newcomers unfamiliar with the customs of Plains Indians, patrolled and tried to keep whites from impinging on Indian Lands. Some of the old mountain men and Indian traders, like Jim Beckwourth and William Bent, pressed for justice toward the

tribes, and Cheyenne and Arapaho peace chiefs Black Kettle and Little Raven continually professed their people's desire for peace.

In the fall of 1860, representatives from the United States Commissioner of Indian Affairs met with Black Kettle and Little Raven, Cheyenne and Arapaho chiefs and others, at Bent's New Fort and Fort Wise to renegotiate tribal lands defined by the 1851 Fort Laramie Treaty. The resulting Treaty of Fort Wise provided a greatly reduced reservation for both tribes, but promised a sawmill and prime agricultural land, 40 acres for each tribal member. Black Kettle and the other leaders affixed their marks on February 18, 1861. The guaranteed land was in fact desolate and barren, not farmable, but with no white settlers anywhere near.

The Denver business community and United States Commissioner of Indian Affairs and the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes interpreted the treaty quite differently. Both tribes simply continued to hunt buffalo in their ancestral manner, between the Platte and Arkansas Rivers, and avoided the new reservation.

On April 12, 1861, Confederate artillery fired on Fort Sumter, South Carolina, and unleashed America's Civil War.

Colorado Territory declared loyalty to the Union, while Albert Pike went to Indian Territory to recruit American Indians to the Confederate cause. Some joined up with Pike, and widespread paranoia that the Plains Indians could be conspiring with the South spread through Colorado towns.

In 1862, William Bent's 19-year-old son George returned to Colorado Territory after fighting with the Confederate Army at Wilson's Creek and Pea Ridge. As white fear of Indians rose, George went to live with his mother's tribe, the Southern Cheyenne. A prolific writer who kept a running account of events, George later joined the Crooked Lance or Elk Horn Scraper warrior society.

In August 1862, hostilities broke out near Mankato, Minnesota, between white settlers and a group of Santee Sioux, who were starving in their internment camp, unable to hunt and suffering prolonged non-delivery of allotted government food and supplies. As many as 700 civilians and soldiers were killed, and more than 300 Santee were arrested. President Abraham Lincoln personally pardoned all except 38 of the Santee. For those 38, he authorized execution. They were hanged in the largest mass execution in American history.

Hysteria about the Santee uprising spread like prairie fire and bolstered long-lasting paranoia across Western frontier communities. White settlers and travelers on the Southern Plains and around the gold fields of Denver City begged for Army protection against possible marauding Indians who might also be conspiring with the Confederacy. Dreaming of statehood, Territorial Governor John Evans exploited their fears.

Distrust grew on both sides between the whites and the Cheyenne. Evans and his military commander, Colonel John M. Chivington, were convinced that Colorado would be attacked by hostile Indians at any moment and that the only solution was military force to herd the Cheyenne and Arapaho onto the reservation stipulated by the Fort Wise Treaty.

In the meantime, many Colorado troops had been ordered east to join the Union effort against the South. In 1863, Territorial Governor Evans traveled to Washington DC to beg for their return to help with the Indian "problem." The War Department refused.

The winter of 1863-64 brought extreme weather, starvation and smallpox to the Plains tribes. Indian agents routinely stole government provisions intended for the tribes, and some raiding Indian bands

stole food from settlers and travelers. The Southern Cheyennes and Arapahoes called it the “year of hunger.”

During the summer of 1864, an estimated 5,000-10,000 Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapaho and other allied tribes, along with thousands of horses, camped at the headwaters of the Republican and Smoky Hill rivers between the Platte and the Arkansas, about 90 miles northeast of Fort Lyon (renamed from Fort Wise in 1862) and launched raids against Overland Trail wagon trains. These raids were spawned by unexpected and unwarranted attacks on Cheyenne camps earlier in the spring and the killing of Cheyenne Peace Chief Lean Bear on the plains of Kansas while he was wearing a Presidential Peace Medal given to him by Abraham Lincoln.

In late May 1864, Governor Evans finally received authority from the United States War Department to raise a Regiment of “100-day’s men” to become the 3rd Regiment Cavalry, Colorado (U.S.) Volunteers. Chivington immediately ordered all troops into the field. Even innocent and unarmed Indians were shot on sight. Yet, on occasion, when Cheyenne warriors outnumbered Army troops, the respected peace chief Black Kettle called off the fight. Black Kettle understood that killing U.S. Army soldiers would mean the end of any hope for peace.

In June, a ranch family, the Hungates, husband, wife and two children, were killed and mutilated, reportedly by Indians. Civil authorities displayed the Hungates’ remains in Denver City, enraging the citizenry to demand action. Black Kettle asked William Bent to intercede on behalf of the tribe’s peaceful intentions. Bent met with Chivington, but the “Fighting Parson” was not moved. The Dog Soldiers and other militant Indians resumed their raids, cutting off travel along the Platte River and stranding Denver from its suppliers for several weeks.

In June, Governor Evans, perhaps trying to regain control of the situation, issued a proclamation aimed at separating friendly Indians from hostiles. He offered peace and protection to “friendlies” and continued war on “hostiles.” Seeing renewed hope, Black Kettle accepted the terms for friendly Indians. Within a few weeks, Black Kettle, White Antelope and Arapaho chiefs Left Hand and Little Raven, with the Dog Soldier chief Bull Bear, visited their friend Major Edward Wynkoop, commander of Fort Lyon, to request a peace meeting with Governor Evans.

On September 28, 1864, Governor Evans met with the tribal leaders at Camp Weld near Denver. Chivington also attended, along with Wynkoop, mountain man interpreter John S. Smith, and others.

Evans, ignoring all reports to the contrary, insisted that the Cheyenne were not friendly, but were in alliance with the hostile Sioux and would have to make peace with the military. Chivington concluded the meeting by asserting that “...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 anyone else, and you can go with him when you get ready to do that.”

Back at Fort Lyon, Wynkoop distributed rations to the Indians and promised that they would have the Army’s protection until department headquarters decided where to permanently locate them. For a few days, the tribes and the fort’s officers enjoyed peaceful relations, then Black Kettle and Little Raven led their people about forty miles away from the fort to camp at Sand Creek and wait.

Chivington subsequently relieved Wynkoop of his command and installed Major Scott Anthony in his place. Anthony reassured the tribes that they had nothing to fear from the soldiers, and Wynkoop was transferred to a new command at Fort Riley, Kansas.

On November 20, 1864, Chivington and his 100-day volunteers, made up of “bad-men” as George Bent called them – rode south from Denver and stopped all travel on the Arkansas River. They reached William Bent’s home and placed the old trader under house arrest to prevent him from warning the

Cheyenne. Chivington coerced William's son Robert to serve as his guide to the Sand Creek encampment. William's other sons, George and Charles, were already camped there with the Cheyenne. Chivington then rode on to Fort Lyon.

On the cold night of November 28, as the Southern Cheyenne and Southern Arapaho slept in the belief that they had found peace at last, Chivington and Anthony and their troops departed Fort Lyon and rode all night to reach the camp by daybreak.

Many eyewitness accounts from survivors and soldiers, including George Bent's letters, tell what happened.

Before dawn on the morning of November 29, a few people awoke to what they believed was the sound of buffalo thundering toward the camp. It was 675 mounted soldiers, riding down on them from the south. The soldiers kept firing until mid-afternoon.

Confused and terrified, the people, mostly women and children, ran in every direction trying to escape the rifles and howitzers. They were shot down, and the soldiers shot them over and over as they lay dead or dying. Some were able to reach the banks of Sand Creek and dug out shallow pits with their hands, trying to create some protection.

The old Cheyenne chief White Antelope, who had traveled to Washington in 1863 to meet President Lincoln, had been assuring the people for months that the whites had good intentions. He had encouraged his people to come to Sand Creek because it was under the Army's protection and they would be safe. When White Antelope realized what was happening, he stood in front of the soldiers, wearing the medal Lincoln had given him, and sang his death song. The soldiers shot him dead, cut off his nose and ears and scrotum – to make a "good tobacco pouch."

Black Kettle at first kept telling the people not to panic, that the soldiers would not harm them. He tied a large American flag and a white flag of peace to a lodgepole and stood in front of his lodge waving it back and forth until most of the people had fled the rampaging soldiers. Then he and his wife, Medicine Woman Later, joined the escaping people running for the pits. The soldiers shot Medicine Woman later nine times.

Nearly everyone in the Arapaho camp was killed. Because the body of Left Hand was never found, Chivington believed that the peaceful leader who spoke English and trusted whites had escaped. Others believed he was killed. According to George Bent, Left Hand was wounded and escaped with the other survivors, but died after they reached the safety of the Smoky Hill River camp.

When the soldiers ran out of ammunition, they began scalping and mutilating the dead and wounded, taking body parts as souvenirs.

The soldiers looted every lodge, stealing all the buffalo robes, clothing and food they could carry. They also took the ponies that hadn't been herded away by the first Indians to escape. Then they burned what was left of the village.

Company D of the First Colorado Cavalry, led by Captain Silas S. Soule, refused to participate in the carnage. Realizing that the camp was a friendly village of mostly women and children, Soule tried to stop Chivington. But the colonel shouted him back to his place and ordered him to battle. Instead, Soule ordered his men not to fire.

After dark, Black Kettle crept back down the creek to find his wife's body. Amazingly, though filled with bullets, she was still alive. He put her on his back and carried her to the safety of the pits. The survivors, many desperately wounded, stayed hidden until long past dark and the soldiers finally became quiet.

Then they began dragging themselves away from Sand Creek, across fifty miles of frozen prairie toward the Smoky Hill River where their relatives were camped. Having fled their lodges without even time to dress properly, they were half naked, bleeding and freezing. Once there, some of the injured, including Medicine Woman Later and George Bent, recovered from their wounds. At least 200 others were dead, 75% of them women and children.

In the following days, Chivington sent a dispatch to the *Rocky Mountain News*, proclaiming a great victory in “one of the most bloody Indian battles ever fought on these plains.” The Third Colorado Cavalry arrived in Denver in mid-December to the wild adoration of a heroes’ welcome. They bragged about their “glorious victory” and paraded themselves and their grisly souvenirs through the streets. Chivington led the parade, hoisting a pole with a live eagle tied to it.

Their celebrations lasted only a short time, however, as word began to spread that the “battle” was in fact a treacherous slaughter of peaceful people who were under the Army’s “protection.”

In March 1865, the U.S. House of Representatives began several Congressional investigations. Witnesses included Silas Soule, by then no longer in the Army but serving as provost marshal of Denver, Major Edward Wynkoop, Major Scott Anthony and many others who had been at Sand Creek. (Soule, Wynkoop and Anthony had also fought with Chivington at the Battle of Glorieta Pass in 1862.) Witnesses even included Governor Evans and the old scout Kit Carson.

Soule’s testimony was the most condemning, and he received many threats against his life from Denverites loyal to Chivington. On the night of April 23, while walking home from the theatre with his new bride, Soule responded to shots fired by drunken soldiers and was killed by a Colorado soldier named Charles Squiers. Military records state that Soule died in the “performance of his duty.” His death shocked the city, and opinion began to turn against Chivington, whom many believed to be behind the shooting.

The investigating committees concluded their work in May, and though they took no action against Chivington, issued a statement finding it “difficult to believe that beings in the form of men, and disgracing the uniform of the United States soldiers and officers, could commit or countenance the commission of such acts of cruelty and barbarity as are detailed in the testimony.”

Forever unrepentant, in mid-1865, the disgraced Chivington published a pamphlet to the people of Colorado, asserting that “I stand by Sand Creek.” Ultimately he moved his family to Nebraska, then Ohio, returning to Colorado in the late 19th century, where he died.

The Cheyenne Dog Soldiers and allied tribes extracted vengeance for what happened at Sand Creek. They looted and burned towns and escalated the war across the Plains. The Army escalated it further. After the Civil War, General William Tecumseh Sherman was placed in command of all lands west of the Mississippi and campaigned to rid the Southern Plains of Indians. Part of his strategy was to encourage wholesale slaughter of the great buffalo herds along the railroad routes, destroying the tribes’ most important food and shelter source and driving the American bison to the brink of extinction. One by one, the tribes were defeated and confined to reservations.

Despite Sand Creek, Black Kettle still sought peace, and the Army still sought him. Before dawn on November 27, 1868, in an eerie déjà vu almost four years to the day after the Sand Creek Massacre, the U.S. Army’s Seventh Cavalry, under command of General George Armstrong Custer, attacked the peace chief’s still sleeping village on the banks of the Washita River at the western edge of Oklahoma. This time, Black Kettle and Medicine Woman Later were both killed.

Today, Sand Creek is a sacred, peaceful and protected place. Following legislation introduced by Colorado Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell (Cheyenne), the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic

Site was established as a unit of the National Park Service in 2007. Sand Creek is also the only officially certified Civil War site in the State of Colorado.

There is a short hiking trail to an overlook of the massacre site where visitors can listen to the wind and experience this tragic American story in their own hearts. Cheyenne and Arapaho descendants visit here often and hold an annual Spiritual Healing Run each November.

There is no overnight lodging or camping within the park, but hotels and restaurants can be found in Eads, a short distance to the west, or Lamar, Colorado, 35 miles to the south. For more information about visiting Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site: www.nps.gov/sand; 719.729.3003 or 719.438.5916.

For more information about the American Indians whose ancestors endured and survived the Sand Creek Massacre:

Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes: <http://www.c-a-tribes.org>

Northern Cheyenne Nation: <http://www.cheyennenation.com/>

Northern Arapaho Tribe: <http://www.northernarapaho.com/>

Tribal Website Links

These tribal websites, and possibly others, will be included for more information only with permission and guidance from the tribes:

Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes: <http://www.c-a-tribes.org>

Northern Cheyenne Nation: <http://www.cheyennenation.com/>

Northern Arapaho Tribe: <http://www.northernarapaho.com/>

Kiowa Tribe: <http://www.kiowatribe.org/>

Comanche Nation of Oklahoma: <http://www.comanchenation.com/>

Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma: <http://www.pawneenation.org/>

Navajo Nation: <http://discovernavajo.com/>

Southern Ute Indian Tribe: <http://www.southern-ute.nsn.us/>

Ute Mountain Ute Tribe: www.utemountainute.com/

Mescalero Apache Tribe (Mescalero, Chiricahua, Lipan): <http://www.mescaleroapache.com/>

Jicarilla Apache Nation: <http://www.jicarilla.net>

Pueblo of Jemez and Pueblo of Pecos: www.jemezpuablo.com

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