

Sand Creek Massacre

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Sand Creek Massacre
National Historic Site



Cheyenne camp circa 1860's - William S. Soule Photograph

"I think that by locating these places and having an actual place to go and pay homage to the people who died there, for us it's going to bring closure to a lot of tribal pain that we are presently experiencing."

Dr. Richard Little Bear
Northern Cheyenne

Background



Stacy Riggs (Red Cap or Lone Wolf), Cheyenne eyewitness to Sand Creek, Washita, the Dull Knife Fight, and the Little Big Horn. (Photo: Soul of the Red Man, T.B. Williams)

At dawn on November 29, 1864, approximately 700 Colorado volunteer troops attacked a village of Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians along Big Sandy Creek, 160 miles southeast of Denver. Chiefs included Black Kettle, White Antelope, Sand Hill, Bear Tongue, and the Arapaho, Left Hand. During the course of the day, troops leveled a barrage of fire, including howitzers, against the fleeing Indians. This pursuit extended for several miles along the creek. By day's end, about 150 Cheyenne and Arapaho lay dead – many of the victims being women, children and the elderly. The soldiers also suffered, with dozens of wounded and the dead taken in wagons to Fort Lyon, 35 miles south.

Questions about the attack, claims of atrocities committed by some volunteers, and the event's controversial aftermath engendered inquiry by a military commission and Congressional investigations. Soon, the events of November 29 would be labeled the Sand Creek Massacre.

Through deposition and other means, many veterans, including the commanding Colonel John Chivington, defended the attack. Other officers and men strongly condemned the actions, some detailing the ghastly scene in testimony and letters.

Site Establishment



Project Team members searching for artifacts, May, 1999 (Photo: Tom Meier)

In 1998 Senator Ben Campbell (CO-R) introduced a bill that resulted in legislation known as the **Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site Study Act**. This legislation directed the National Park Service to identify the location of the Sand Creek Massacre and define its potential as a unit of the National Park Service. **The Sand Creek Massacre Site Location Project** used historical documentation, oral history, traditional tribal methods, aerial photography, and archeology. Two documents, a **Site Location Study** and a **Special Resources Study and Environmental Assessment** were

published as a summary of the project.

On the basis of these findings, on November 7, 2000 President Clinton signed into law the **Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site Establishment Act**. The Act recognizes the national significance of the Sand Creek Massacre and authorizes its establishment as a unit of the National Park Service.

Approximately 12,500 acres in Kiowa County, Colorado are authorized for inclusion within the National Historic Site.



“Each evening she would start telling us the story of Sand Creek...she would always cry when she told the story, and I always wondered why she cried...and then when I started growing older I began to realize what she went through, seeing all her people getting killed...” **Red Medicine Woman (Nellie Tallbull Beartusk)**

A Public ceremony dedicating the site is scheduled for Saturday April 28, 2007. The event will be held at the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site beginning at 10:00 am.



Scenes from Arapaho Spiritual Healing Runs, held annually at the Sand Creek Massacre NHS (Meier/NPS Photos)

The National Park Service is working in partnership with the State of Colorado, the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, the Northern Arapaho Tribe, landowners, Kiowa County, and other partners in the process of establishing the National Historic Site. Currently 920 acres are in National Park Service ownership. Another 1,465 acres has been conveyed to the United States from the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma – this land, as trust, will be included in the National Historic Site. The Conservation Fund, a non-profit organization, is working to acquire additional parcels of land.

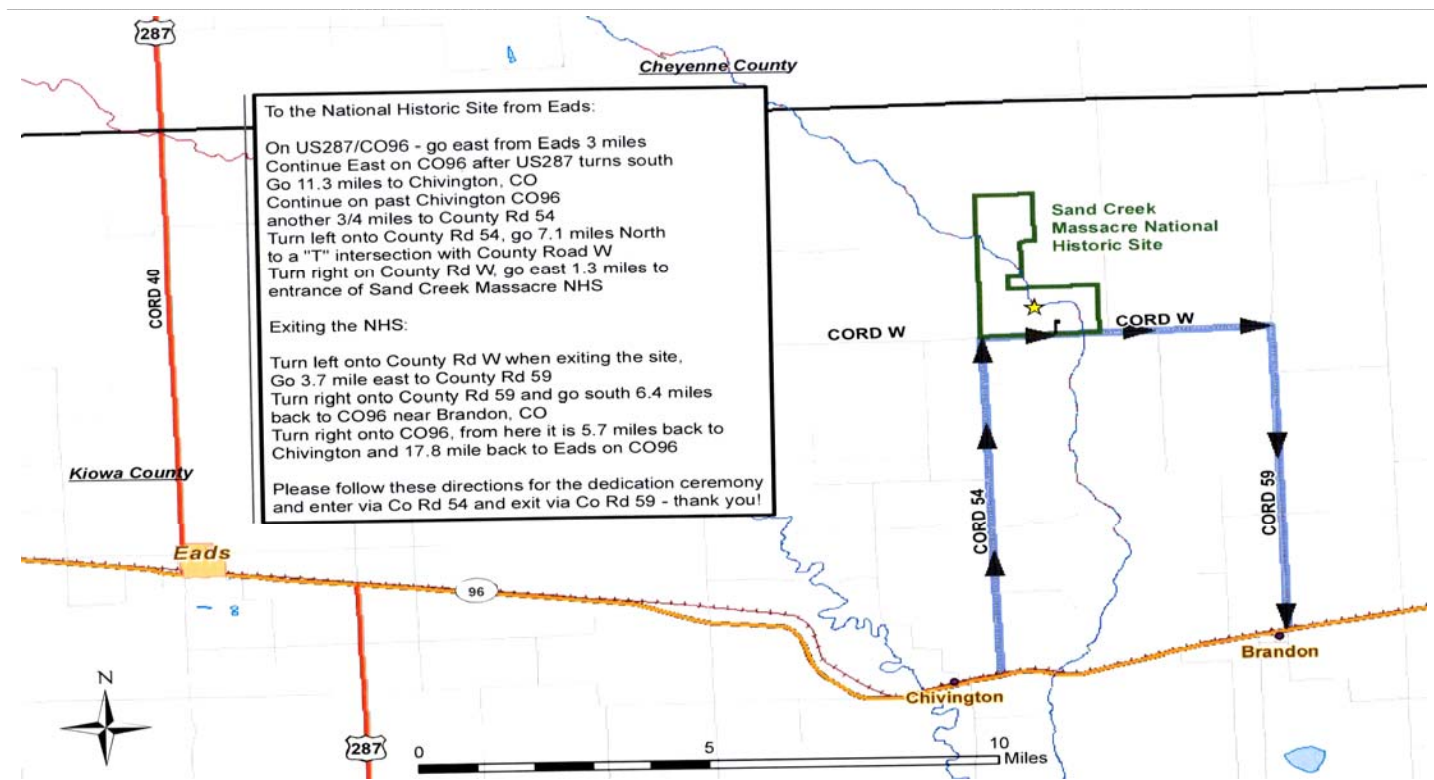
**TENTATIVE AGENDA
APRIL 28**

- 10:00 am: Opening Ceremony**
- 10:45 Local Dignitaries Speak**
- 11:00 State Dignitaries Speak**
- 11:20 Federal Dignitaries Speak**
- 11:40 Tribal Dignitaries Speak**
- 12:10 Department of the Interior Dignitaries Speak**
- 12:30 pm: Closing Ceremony**

For updated information about the site’s dedication as well as other park news, please check our website at www.nps.gov/sand/ or call 719-383-5051.



Scene from Cheyenne Spiritual Healing Run, Held annually at the Sand Creek Massacre NHS (Photo: NPS)



How to Contact Us

Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site
 910 Wansted
 PO Box 249
 Eads, CO 81036

Alexa Roberts, Superintendent
 alexa_roberts@nps.gov
 (719) 438-5916

Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site support office:
 35110 Highway 194 East
 La Junta, CO 81050

Craig Moore, Park Ranger
 craig_moore@nps.gov
 (719) 383-5051

Donna Breslin, Administration
 donna_breslin@nps.gov
 (719) 383-5050