

# ESSENTIAL CIVIL WAR CURRICULUM

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## The Sand Creek Massacre

By Ari Kelman, University of California, Davis

### Resources

#### If you can read only one book

Author	<i>Title</i> . City: Publisher, Year.
West, Elliott	<i>The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado</i> . Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998.

### Books and Articles

Author	<i>Title</i> . City: Publisher, Year.
Carroll, John M.	<i>Sand Creek Massacre: A Documentary History 1865-1867</i> . New York: Sol Lewis, 1973.
Greene, Jerome A. and Douglas D. Scott	<i>Finding Sand Creek: History, Archeology, and the 1864 Massacre Site</i> . Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004.
Hahn, Steven	<i>A Nation Without Borders: The United States and Its World in an Age of Civil Wars, 1830-1910</i> . New York: Viking Press, 2016.
Halaas, David F. and Andrew E. Masich	<i>Halfbreed: The Remarkable True Story of George Bent – Caught Between the Worlds of the Indian and the White Man</i> . Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2004.
Hoig, Stan	<i>The Sand Creek Massacre</i> . Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961.
Hyde, George E. and Savoie Lottinville	<i>Life of George Bent: Written from His Letters</i> . Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968.

Kelman, Ari	<i>A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling Over the Memory of Sand Creek</i> . Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.
Roberts, Gary L.	<i>Massacre at Sand Creek: How Methodists Were Involved in an American Tragedy</i> . Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2016.

## Organizations

Organization Name	Description, Contact information including address, email
Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site	The National Park Service manages the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site. The site is open from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. 7 days a week from April 1-November 30 and Monday-Friday from December 1-March 31 and there is a visitor center. Their address is 910 Wansted, POB 249, Eads, CO, 81036-0249, 8 miles north of the town of Chivington. Their website is: <a href="https://www.nps.gov/sand/index.htm">https://www.nps.gov/sand/index.htm</a>

## Web Resources

URL	Name and description
<a href="http://www.kclonewolf.com/History/SandCreek/sc-index.html">http://www.kclonewolf.com/History/SandCreek/sc-index.html</a>	The Sand Creek Massacre is a website devoted to collecting resources related to the Sand Creek Massacre.

## Other Sources

Name	Description, Contact information including address, email
University of Denver’s John Evans Study Committee	The University of Denver’s John Evans Study Committee investigated and reported on the role of Colorado Governor John Evans, founder of the University, in the Sand Creek Massacre. Their report is available here: <a href="https://portfolio.du.edu/evcomm/page/52699">https://portfolio.du.edu/evcomm/page/52699</a>

<p>Northwestern University’s John Evans Study Committee</p>	<p>Northwestern University’s John Evans Study Committee investigated and reported on the role of Colorado Governor John Evans, founder of the University, in the Sand Creek Massacre. Their report is available here:  <a href="http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/committees/equity-and-inclusion/john-evans-study.html">http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/committees/equity-and-inclusion/john-evans-study.html</a></p>
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### Scholars

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### Topic Précis

On November 29, 1864, approximately 700 federal troops, commanded by Colonel John Milton Chivington, attacked a Cheyenne and Arapaho encampment located on the high plains of Southeastern Colorado Territory. The assault lasted the better part of the day. When the bloodletting finally ended, more than 150 Arapahos and Cheyennes lay dead, the vast majority of whom were women, children, and the elderly. The next day, Chivington’s men burned what remained of the Indian village and took from the killing field grim trophies: scalps, fingers, and, some observers later insisted, genitalia hacked from their victims. The slaughter would come to be known as the Sand Creek Massacre. The massacre was rooted in the Civil War with local Colorado officials concerned that the Natives were being led astray by Confederate agents. It was also rooted in the 1858-1859 gold strikes west of Denver and the flood of newcomers eager to become wealthy and often ignoring tribal land claims and treaty boundaries who threatened to wash away the local indigenous people. The Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes were divided with some supporting the reservations created for them by the 1851 Fort Laramie Treaty and the 1861 Treaty of Fort Wise and others such as the Cheyenne Dog Soldiers opposed and willing in some cases to resort to violent resistance. At the beginning of the war the federal government has removed most of the regular army forces in the west to fight in the Civil War leaving it to locally raised militia to provide security. In the summer of 1862 the Federal government they failed in 1862 to deliver annuities required by treaty to the Cheyenne and Arapaho and to the Dakota in Minnesota. Hungry, the Dakota rose and killed hundreds of settlers in the Dakota War of 1862. Unrest among the tribes in Colorado grew throughout 1863 although it remained peaceful, but Governor Evans and others remained concerned that hostilities were imminent. In April 1864 Cheyenne Dog Soldiers fought briefly with a detachment of Colorado volunteers. In June Nathan Hungate and his family were murdered and butchered, inflaming fears of a Native uprising and over the summer violence by Colorado soldiers against the tribes was answered by violence by Natives against settlers. In August,

the 3<sup>rd</sup> Colorado regiment of Indian fighters was raised from local volunteers. In September, a gathering of Cheyenne and Arapaho peace chiefs met with Governor Evans, Colonel Chivington now leading the 3<sup>rd</sup> Colorado and Major Edward Wynkoop (commander of Camp Weld) and Captain Silas Soule (an officer serving under Chivington) at Camp Weld. The tribes were still divided with many Dog Soldiers refusing to support the peace chiefs. The peace chiefs agreed to assemble those of their followers who wanted peace and to camp near Fort Weld which they did in early October. Governor Evans and Colonel Chivington faced a political dilemma after the Camp Weld meeting, Evans seeking higher political office and Chivington, erstwhile hero of Glorieta Pass, trying to cover himself in more glory by overstating the threat of an all-out war with barbarous tribes united in their desire to halt the march of white civilization into the West. A month later, on November 16, knowing that peaceful Arapahos and Cheyennes were waiting near Fort Lyon, Chivington started marching with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Colorado and elements of the 1<sup>st</sup> Colorado southeast from Denver. The chiefs camped with their bands along the banks of Sand Creek. Black Kettle, following instructions from Fort Lyon's commander, flew an American flag over his lodge. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Colorado attacked at dawn. Captain Soule refused to allow the men under his command to participate. As soon as the massacre ended, the fight to define it began. Chivington claimed for the rest of his life that it was a glorious battle. Soule denounced it and testified to that effect before federal investigators. He was shot dead on the streets of Denver in 1865 by a soldier from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Colorado. Three federal investigations eventually determined that Sand Creek was a massacre. Efforts to challenge this narrative continued culminated in 1909 with a memorial to battles fought by Colorado soldiers in the Civil War which included Sand Creek. By 1950 the balance had swung somewhat, and two historical markers were raised, one telling the story as Chivington had it and one with a mixed message "Sand Creek: 'Battle' or 'Massacre'". The most recent twist in the saga of the memory of Sand Creek came in 1998 with the creation of the Sand Creek Massacre National Historical Site telling a balanced story about the event and vindicating Captain Silas Soule's brave humanity 134 years earlier.

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