

The Massacre of Black Kettle Band

By Gen. George A. Custer & the 7th U.S.
Cavalry

Dear Dot. You call to my mind
for a little grove yard on a low
ridge 3/4 of one mile West of Cheyenne, Roger Mills Co.- Okla.
on a low ridge over looking the Washita - a small
stream here - ~~sister~~ sleeps a sister of mine, she next
older than me, she & I were play mates - (Florine, you never
knew her.) And 1/2 mile to the W. west, on the south side
of the stream there was a Cotton wood grove, where
stood the 51 wig wams that sheltered Black kettle band -
principally squaws & children - on the fateful night of
May 27th, 1868. When Gen. George A. Custer & his 200
troopers of the 7th U.S. Cavalry at break of day -
swept through their village - pouring a hail of death
into their frail tents. Slaughtering without
distinction Women & children - old & young.

And display of the power & the ruthlessness of the
United States government as represented by
its Army.

I only knew ^{Gen. G.A.} Custer by his
deeds. And a great authority has said
"By their works ye shall know them."

He was a graduate of West Point - an officer
in the Federal Army. Gen. J. S. C. Johnson the best of
authority says he robbed Southern people. He was an
unscrupulous dashing reckless officer.. He had been
court martialed & out of the service. But

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reinstated - and in the fall of 1868
 from General Custer had in the fall of 1868-
~~been reinstated~~ - * was on the Kansas S.W. frontier in
 command of the 7th U.S. Cavalry - He learned that
 the Cheyenne, Kiowa & Arapahoe Indians had gone into
 winter quarters on the upper waters of the Washita -
 There were always traders in touch ~~with~~ with the
 wild tribes. Custer conceived the idea that a ~~sop~~
 by a rapid dash - after Indians were in winter quarters
 he could surprise some village - win to him an easy
 victory - James In the latter part of Nov. 1868 - after
 snows had fallen - and ^{Indian} hunters had quit the range -
 He with the 7th Cavalry & Mule team to carry supplies -
 including grain for horses - made a forced march -
 and when within 30 to 40 ms. of the Indians
 encampments known to be on the Washita - where
 they had the benefit for fire wood & shelter, of the jungles of
 timber along its banks - He left his wagon train with
 a guard & with orders to follow & with 80 picked
 cavalrymen - made a night's march to down the Washita
 sending Scouts in advance - At two o'clock in
 the morning ^{of Nov 27} the Scouts pick up - in the by star light pick
 up in the bouldered snow the signs that show where the
 Indian horse herd had been grazed - And a short
 way ahead from the top a ridge - ^{topped} the tops of the
 canes to ~~seen~~ showing dark against the snow, -

scattered through a cottonwood grove.

The occasional bark of a dog - & the cry of a child told that it ^{was} a camp of peace - That there were mothers & children there. Custer ^{had noticed his} columns were halted, out of ear shot. And he ^{went} forward with scouts & looks & listened -.

He ^{saw} a sleeping village under a canopy of blue - studded with twinkling stars; perhaps fifty wigwams - containing 150- to 200 souls - 75% of whom must have been squaws & children. Not above 50 could be fighting men. The snow covered the valleys & low lying prairie hills. Only a scattering of timber along a small stream - across which a child could wade. ^{Shares no shelter} for those who would ^{fight} no shelter refuge for those who would flee -.

Custer looks & listened - they ^{were} delivered into his hands - All as dead as he desired. Shall it be a bloodless victory - or a massacre - He has but to draw dismount his men - and silently draw a cordow around them - & let them awake his prisoners -

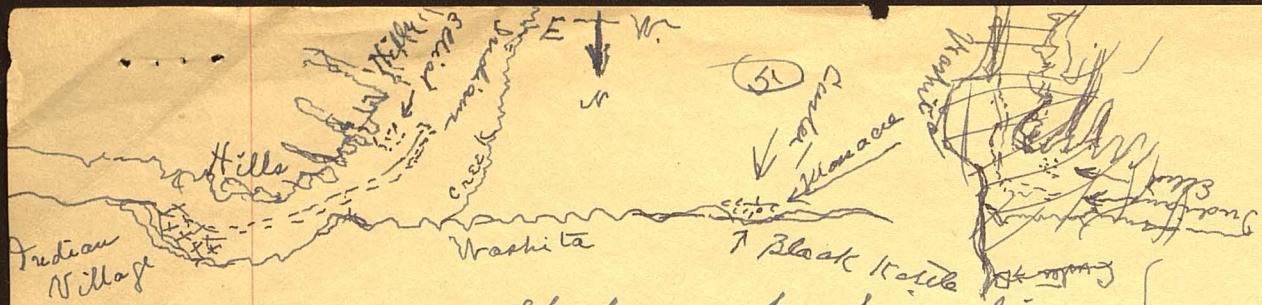
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But war means blood & carnage--
and the path of glory is never - the
path of peace.

Custer returns to his men -
Sends Maj Elliott down the little stream
to the left, and Colv. Elliott Thompson
around the camp to the South & right -
with orders for their command to
meet beyond the camp. & cut off
retreat - while he with the main
body of the troops attacks from the
west.

With the break of day Custer charged,
swept through the sleeping camp,
pouring a hail of death into tents -
& riding down those who attempted
to flee. A few minutes of
slaughter - in which women & children
were the chief victims. & there -
the gathering of scalps & the
looting of tents.

The only real
fighting that was done - was
by Maj. Elliott & 19 men - who
had pursued a bunch of Indians



a small bunch of Indians - who had escaped ^{through a gap} between Custer & Colv Thompsons - The Indians had crossed a small creek running into the Washita from the south. He ^{Elliot} & his detachment followed the Indians across the Valley & up a draw into the low hills ~~back to the~~ to the east.

Returning their retreat was cut off by Indians who had come up the valley of the Washita from a village farther East - & hearing the firing ~~cut~~ behind - Maj. Elliot & his men made the mistake of relying on Custer to come to their relief -.

Instead of cutting their way through they dismounted, and lying down in a circle in ~~the~~ high woods & grass attempted to hold the Indians off until aid could reach them - Aid that never came. From Indian reports they made a gallant fight, which must have lasted for a long while It was only about two miles

It appeared to me as not so far from Custer to where Elliott must fell - & an open country with only a low ridge intervening -.

The firing between Elliott men & the Indians must have been distinctly heard - Indian Villages two miles farther East had heard the firing of Custers men - and were on their way to the aid of Black Kettle's lodges - when they intercepted Maj. Elliott.

Custer must have recognised the fact that Maj. Elliott had encountered a fresh body of Indians - And taking council of prudence left Elliott & his men to their fate. It is said that he learned from Captives - that there were large villages a few miles down the Washita and that Scouting parties of Indians were seen on surrounding hills -.

Any way he waited among the lodges of Indian dead through the day - rested horses & feasted his troopers. Near night he took up march as

though to continue the campaign
 & moved report said S. W. - East. & went
 into camp ^{on the Washita}. but it could not have
 been half that far. Threw out pickets
 & built camp fires. After dark ~~he~~ he
~~would~~ quietly withdrew - And through
 all that night & the next day ~~had~~
 forced marched far away supply -

On the "Little Bighorn" Custer met his just fate
 whose retribution over took Custer, and
 it is said 200 of the men who were with him,
 at the Massacre of Black Kettle band. Not one
 of his troopers were left. But the difference was
 that faster that on the Washita Custer slaughtered women
 & children & wantonly. While the Indians were de-
 fending themselves against soldiers - General
 Reno was censured for not going to the relief of
 Custers men ~~not~~ in the face of fearful odds -

While on the Washita, Custer withheld relief - while
 Maj Elliot & 19 men fought to their death within the hearing
 of their gunshots, & when the aid of 50 men would have
 saved them.