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Article Summary: A famous military commander and preacher, Chivington was a very controversial figure. He led the force that butchered a sleeping Indian village in the Sand Creek Massacre. His private life included lying, theft, arson, and marriage to his former daughter-in-law, whom he then abandoned.

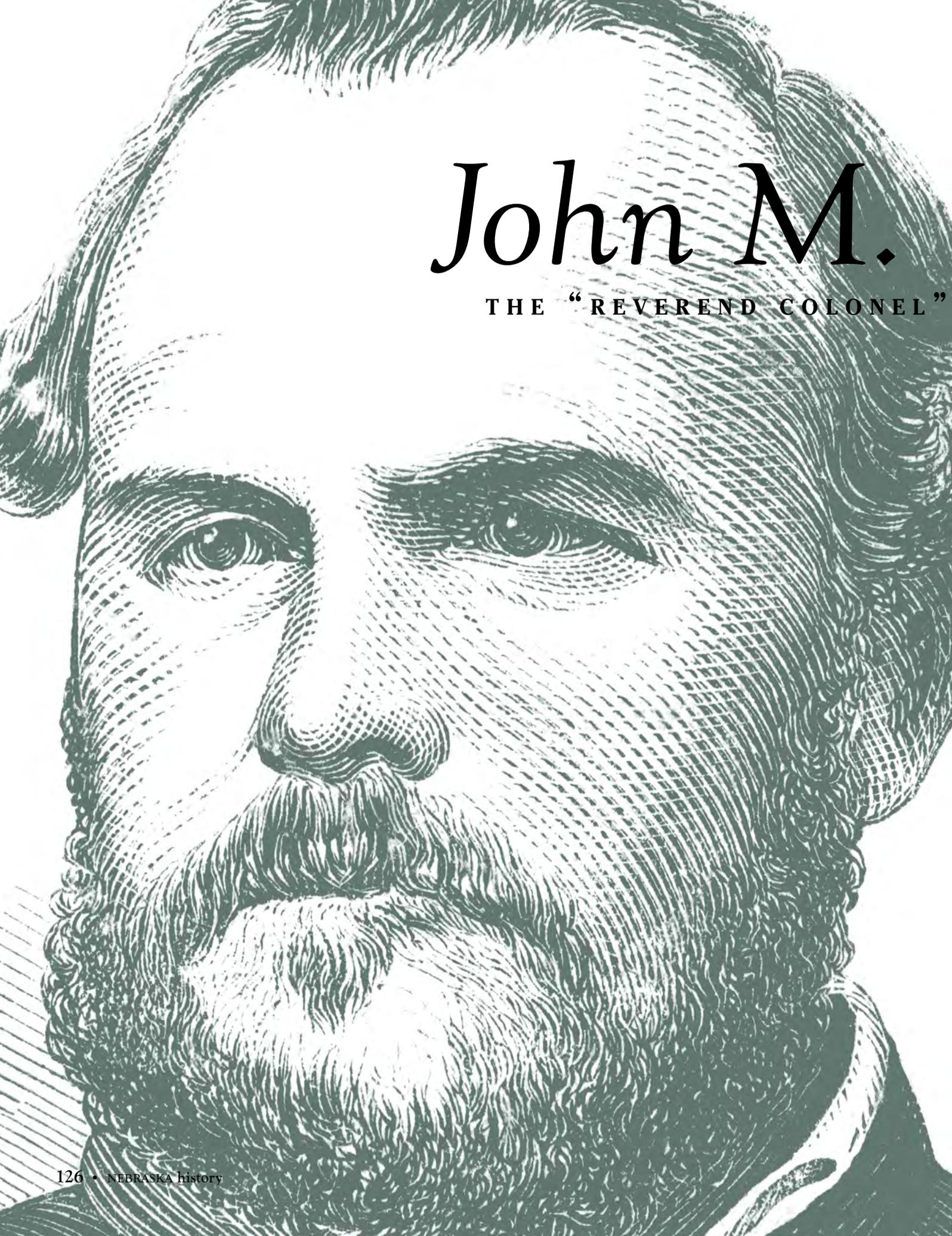
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Photographs / Images: abolitionist, “Jayhawker,” and US Senator James H Lane; John M Chivington (drawing by Frank L Phillips, *1956 Brand Book of the Denver Westerner*); first Methodist Episcopal Church in Nebraska City, Nebraska Territory (J Sterling Morton and Albert Watkins, *Illustrated History of Nebraska*, 1906); Isaac Chivington; Black Kettle, Cheyenne; Sand Creek Massacre cartoon (*Rocky Mountain News*, March 3, 1929); inset letter from James F Tappan to General L W Colby, June 18, 1892; John Chivington (Frank Hall, *History of the State of Colorado*, 1889)



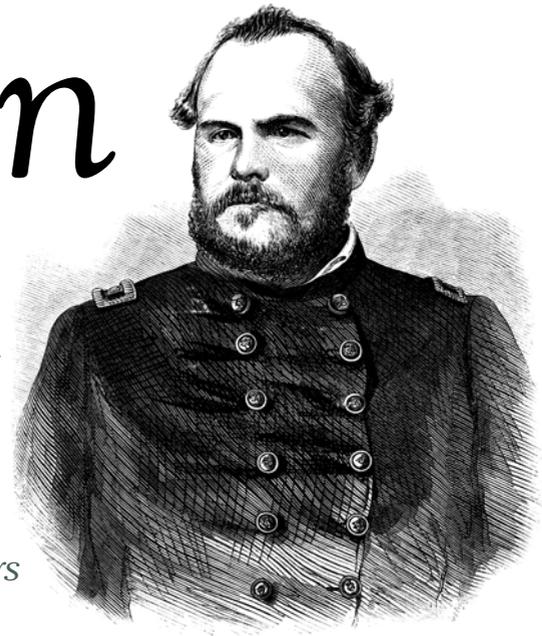
# *John M.*

THE “REVEREND COLONEL”

“MARRY-YOUR-DAUGHTER” “SAND CREEK MASSACRE”

# Chivington

*In many circles the name John M. Chivington is synonymous with the 1864 Sand Creek Massacre where troops of the First and Third Colorado regiments attacked a sleeping village of Cheyenne and Arapahoe families, slaughtered men, women, and children, mutilated the corpses, and took bloody souvenirs for display in the streets of Denver.*



BY LORI COX-PAUL

FOR OTHERS HIS NAME CONJURES UP IMAGES OF the 1862 battle at Glorietta Pass, where First Colorado troops overwhelmed a force of Confederate troops and prevented a Confederate invasion of New Mexico, which is considered by some historians a turning point in the Civil War in the West. Less is known about this complicated and controversial man's personal life, including his several years in Nebraska as a Methodist minister and as the husband to his dead son's widow.

Although much has been written about Chivington, the principal focus of those works has been on the Sand Creek Massacre, the most notorious historical event in which he was involved. A

careful study reveals that Chivington's behavior at Sand Creek was not an aberration. The evidence shows that his entire life was replete with one profane act after another.<sup>1</sup>

John Milton Chivington was born on January 27, 1821, to Isaac and Jane (Runyon) Chivington in Warren County, Ohio, northeast of Cincinnati. Isaac Chivington died in 1826, leaving Jane with the responsibility of raising the couple's four children, Lewis, Sarah, John, and Isaac, Jr.

On July 24, 1839, at age nineteen, John was married to twenty-seven-year-old Martha Rollison (sometimes appearing as Rollason, Rowlison, or Rowlinson) in Jefferson County, Indiana. The Chivingtons had three children, Thomas, Elizabeth Jane, and Sarah. Chivington apparently first supported his family as an apprentice carpenter.

## ***By the grace of God and these I am going to preach here***

In 1842 Chivington experienced a religious conversion at a revival and spent two years engaged in religious study under the direction of his bishop. He entered the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church and, following his ordination, he was assigned to the Zoar Church in the Goshen District of the Ohio Conference.<sup>2</sup>

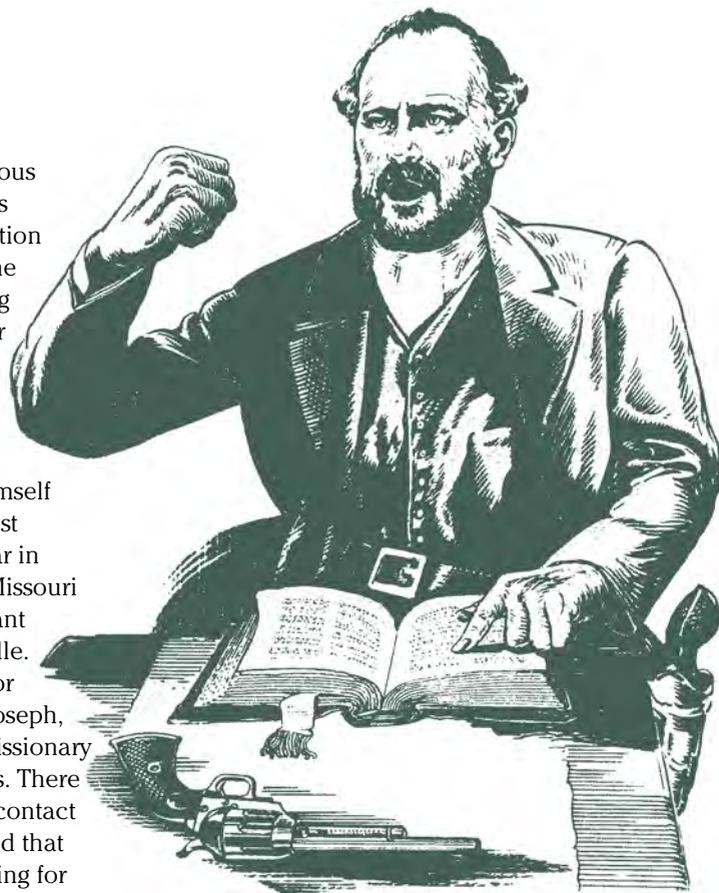
Chivington's career in the ministry continued in parishes in Illinois, Missouri, and Kansas. Chivington later described himself during this period as an "itinerant Methodist minister." He spent approximately one year in Quincy, Illinois, before moving on to the Missouri Conference, where he spent time in Pleasant Green, Hannibal, La Grange, and Shelbyville. In 1851-52 Chivington served as joint pastor in the Methodist Episcopal Church in St. Joseph,

Missouri. In 1853 he became a missionary to the Wyandot Indians in Kansas. There Chivington had his first intimate contact with Native Americans and "found that the savages seemed eagerly seeking for some word of God, some light in the darkness of failure to understand the Almighty."<sup>3</sup> In 1856 he returned to St. Joseph as presiding elder.<sup>4</sup>

Following passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 Chivington became a vocal anti-slavery advocate. According to John Speer, the abolitionist editor of the *Kansas Tribune*, who first encountered Chivington at Fort Scott, Kansas, in 1862, "He was a great admirer of President Lincoln, anxious to do anything for that great man that was in his power."<sup>5</sup>

Speer described an encounter Chivington had with Free Soil leader General James H. Lane. According to Lane, Chivington was "going out to organize the Methodist church for the Republican Party."<sup>6</sup> Holding these views in Missouri, a slave state, and preaching them from the pulpit put him in some danger, as members of a pro-slavery organization in Platte County, Missouri, threatened Chivington with physical harm. A Chivington contemporary recalled the incident in later years:

When the Methodist church in Platte County was split, and there came to be a Northern and a Southern church in Platte County, Missouri, in the 50's, there was a society of men who wore on the lapels of their

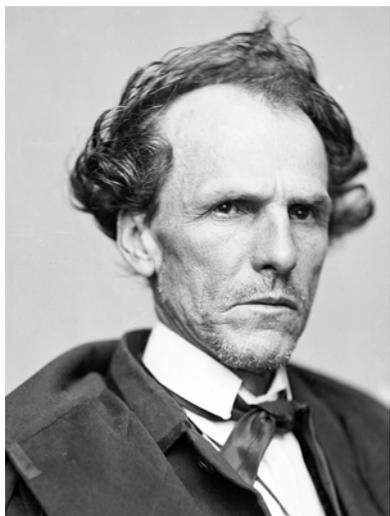


Drawing by Frank L. Phillips. 1956 *Brand Book of the Denver Westerners*.

coats a wisp of hemp, whose aim was to drive all free state men out of the country and Col. Chivington, in particular; those men sent him notice that he must not preach any more or they would tar and feather him. He informed them that he would preach the next Sunday. On the day named, the "hemp men" came to church with a bucket full of tar and a feather pillow of feathers to await events. They did not have to wait long for soon the great and towering form of the brave Chivington appeared. He went to the pulpit, got up, put the Bible in the proper place, pulled out two revolvers, and placing one on each side of the Bible said, "By the grace of God and these two revolvers, I am going to preach here today."<sup>7</sup>

Chivington would not have to face such dangerous conditions much longer; he would soon be transferred to a new position.

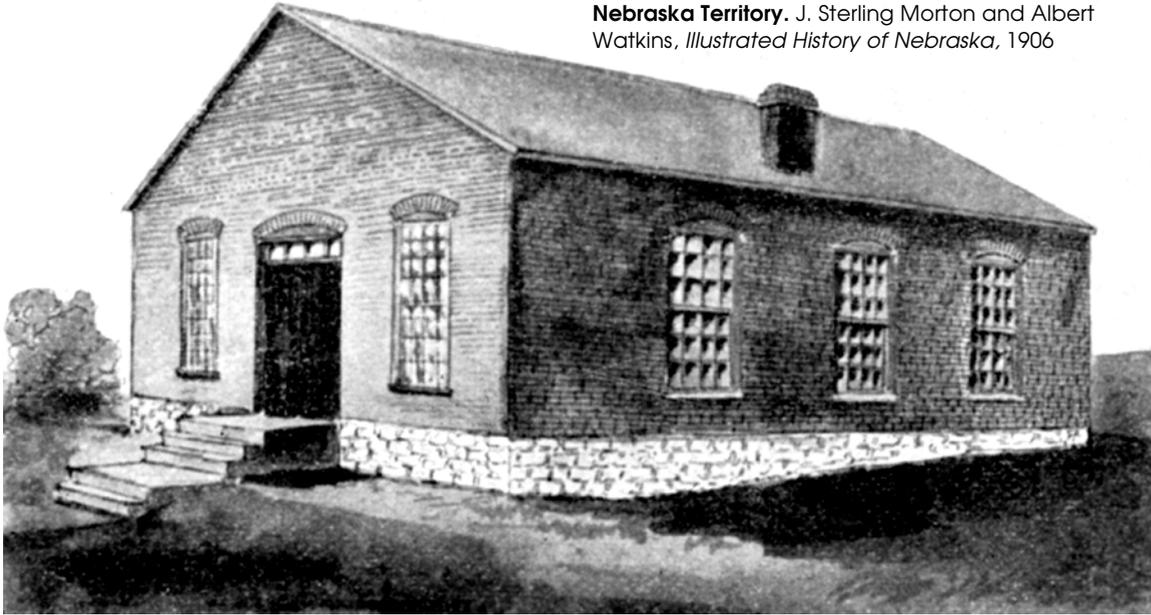
On October 23, 1856, the Kansas-Nebraska Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church convened for the first time in Lawrence, Kansas Territory. Chivington was one of the eighteen charter members. The organization of the Kansas-Nebraska Conference was the result of several years of missionary work by Rev. W. H. Goode,



**Abolitionist, "Jayhawker," and U.S. Senator James H. Lane.** Library of Congress, LC-BH832-595

Overleaf: J. Sterling Morton and Albert Watkins, *Illustrated History of Nebraska*, 1906

**First Methodist Episcopal Church in Nebraska City, Nebraska Territory.** J. Sterling Morton and Albert Watkins, *Illustrated History of Nebraska*, 1906



who had been “appointed to visit and explore the country as thoroughly as practicable . . . so that it may be known how many ministers, if any, should be sent, and at what particular points they should be located.”<sup>8</sup>

While on these travels Reverend Goode discovered Chivington. Rev. James Haynes tells the story in his 1885 history of the early Methodist Episcopal Church: “Mr. Goode, while on his first tour of inspection of the territory, found Mr. John M. Chivington in charge of Wyandotte Mission, Kansas, in July, 1854, and was impressed that he should be given work on one of the regular fields under his care.”<sup>9</sup>

Subsequently, at the initial Kansas-Nebraska Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1856, Chivington was appointed pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Omaha, the territorial capital of Nebraska. Chivington became the second pastor to serve the Omaha congregation, which numbered only six members at that time. Apparently Chivington had a rather unusual style of preaching; he remarked in his first Thanksgiving Day sermon that “he could not see what, in the least, any of those present had to be thankful for.”<sup>10</sup>

At the second Kansas-Nebraska Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in April 1857, Chivington was appointed presiding elder of the Omaha District. The following year Chivington was transferred to the Nebraska City District, where he served as presiding elder. He was reappointed to this position in April 1859.<sup>11</sup>

Chivington also took an active role in the development of several fraternal organizations in Nebraska, and had a long history with the Masonic

Order, joining first in Butlerville, Ohio, in 1846. In 1854 Chivington organized the first Masonic lodge in the Territory of Kansas, where he served as the lodge’s first master. On September 23, 1857, the Masons met in Omaha and organized a Grand Lodge for the Territory of Nebraska, and Chivington was elected as Right Worthy Grand Chaplain. He was re-elected at the second convention in 1858. In 1859 at the Second Annual Meeting of the Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M., he was elected Worthy Grand Chaplain.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to his Masonic activities Chivington became involved with the International Order of Odd Fellows. In April 1858 the Grand Lodge of the I.O.O.F. of the Territory of Nebraska was instituted, and Chivington was elected Grand Chaplain.<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile, the territorial press lauded Chivington for his pioneering ministerial work. *The Nebraska Advertiser* (Brownville) reported, “Mr. C. is making rapid advancement as a public speaker and sound theologian. We can but regard him as a man of extraordinary natural abilities, destined to make his mark in the religious world.”<sup>14</sup> *The Nebraska City News* on September 10, 1859, expressed outrage when it reported that Chivington had been robbed while attending a Methodist camp meeting. “The man who would steal from a preacher, would, we fear, almost steal from a printer! We are reluctant to admit that there is such meanness in Nebraska, but are compelled to do it.” He was thought of highly enough to serve as chaplain of the house for the territorial legislature on December 9, 1857.<sup>15</sup>

John was not the only Reverend Chivington in Nebraska. His younger brother, Isaac, a minister in

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## *I must respectfully decline an appointment as a non-combatant*

the Southeast Indiana Conference, arrived in Nebraska City in 1859. Isaac was appointed pastor of the Nebraska City Methodist Episcopal Church and held the appointment until April 1860, when he took over as presiding elder of the Nebraska City District.<sup>16</sup>

The following year Isaac Chivington was embroiled in scandal. He was brought up on charges of dishonesty, falsehood, and sedition before the first session of the Nebraska Conference. These charges included refusing to turn over to the church the missionary money he collected, and lying to church officials about making a secret arrangement to leave the Methodist Episcopal Church and join the rival Methodist Protestant Church. A hearing found Isaac guilty of several of the charges, and he was deposed from the ministry. Isaac went on to serve as a pastor in the Methodist Protestant Church and later re-affiliated with the Methodist Episcopal Church, becoming a member of the Missouri Conference in 1874.<sup>17</sup>

In 1860 John Chivington still remained free from any controversies. His success in Nebraska brought him continuing advancement in the Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1860 he was named presiding elder of the Rocky Mountain District, an area with a booming population brought by the discovery of gold there in 1858–59.<sup>18</sup> The residents of Nebraska City were sorry to see him go. The *Nebraska City News* of March 24, 1860, commented, “The Elder is a man of great energy and force of character possessed of a vigorous intellect and mature judgment. We wish him complete success in the new field of his labors, and give expression to the universal regret of this community in the loss of so valuable and worthy a citizen as the Rev. John Chivington.” The *People’s Press*, also of Nebraska City, lauded his new appointment:

Mr. C. is peculiarly fitted by his energetic and persevering character, and his experience among border men, for the post which has been assigned to him by the Conference. He carries with him the best wishes of a large portion of the people of this Territory, to whom he has become well known during his labors among them for several years past, and who have learned to respect and esteem him for his manly character in society, and his zeal and activity in his spiritual calling.<sup>19</sup>

Chivington’s ministerial successes continued

in Colorado. Upon arrival in Denver, he found there was no Methodist church building. As he raised funds to build one, Chivington made do preaching in schoolrooms, other churches, and, allegedly, even in a saloon. The *Rocky Mountain News* reported his plans for the church:

Elder Chivington has commenced canvassing the city for subscriptions to build a M. E. Church. The plan proposed is a building 32 x 58 feet, with an eighteen feet story. The structure will be of brick, with a front in Romanesque style of architecture, and side walls relieved by pilasters. . . . We hope our citizens will contribute generously to this new enterprise, and thereby secure its completion yet this fall, while labor and building materials are cheap.<sup>20</sup>

With the outbreak of the Civil War, Chivington found himself yearning to enter into military service. William Gilpin, governor of the Colorado Territory, organized the First Colorado Volunteer Regiment and offered Chivington a commission as a regimental chaplain. However, Chivington did not want to serve as a chaplain, but as a soldier. He said, “I feel compelled to strike a blow in person for the destruction of human slavery and to help in some measure to make this a truly free country. Therefore, I must respectfully decline an appointment as a non-combatant officer, and at the same time urgently request a fighting commission instead.”<sup>21</sup>

Chivington was appointed as major of the First Colorado Regiment in 1861. He would later say of his transition from preacher to soldier, “It was the busiest year of my life. I held quarterly-meetings on Saturdays and Sundays, and then made recruiting speeches and drilled the battalion during the other four days and nights of the week.”<sup>22</sup>

Despite havng no military experience Chivington was successful. A contemporary remarked, “Though wholly unskilled in the science of war, with but little knowledge of drill and discipline, Major Chivington, of herculean frame and gigantic stature, possessed the courage and exhibited the discreet boldness, dash and brilliancy in action which distinguished the more illustrious of our volunteer officers during the war.”<sup>23</sup>

Chivington’s success, however, came at the expense of others. The First Colorado served under the command of Col. John P. Slough, a prominent Denver attorney. Right from the start, Slough and Chivington clashed over the latter’s style of drilling the bored volunteer soldiers, but Chivington quickly earned the respect and admiration of the men.



Isaac Chivington. NSHS RG2411-932

## *officer, and request a fighting commission instead.*

The troops remained inactive until February 1862, when they were ordered to service in New Mexico to ward off an attack by Confederate General H. H. Sibley. The First Colorado made what has been described as a heroic effort to reach Fort Union, a bastion on the Santa Fe Trail. However, enmity among the regiment's officers had reached a fever pitch, with Slough even calling for Chivington's court-martial. Slough described Chivington as that "crazy preacher who thinks he is Napoleon Bonaparte."<sup>24</sup> Col. Edward Canby, in an effort to diffuse the situation, encouraged the officers to focus on the real enemy, the Confederate army. The Colorado troops soon saw action, and Chivington apparently proved himself a capable soldier. Ovando J. Hollister, a member of the First Colorado, described Chivington in battle:

Major Chivington, with a pistol in each hand and one or two under his arms, chawed his lips with only less energy than he gave his orders. He seemed burdened with a new responsibility, the extent of which he had never before realized, and to have no thought of danger. Of commanding presence, dressed in full regimentals, he was a conspicuous mark for the Texan sharp shooters. One of their officers taken prisoner averred that he emptied his revolvers three times at the Major and then made his company fire a volley at him. As if possessed of a charmed life, he galloped unhurt through the storm of bullets.<sup>25</sup>

Following this fight Slough took the main force through Apache Canyon to attack Confederates who were camped at its west end. He assigned Chivington and his troops to make a flanking

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*He galloped unhurt  
through the storm  
of bullets.*

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maneuver over a mountainous route and attack the Confederates from the rear. From a mountain-top Chivington and his men looked down and saw the Confederate supply train. Taking the Confederates by surprise, Chivington's troops captured and burned the entire train of crucial supplies. Chivington later claimed that he then ordered that the accompanying horses and mules, hundreds of animals, be bayoneted to death.<sup>26</sup>

Even Slough praised Chivington's actions. He wrote:

Major Chivington's command . . . fell upon the enemy's train of 60 wagons, capturing and destroying it and capturing and destroying one 6-pounder gun, and taking 2 officers and about 15 men prisoners. The loss of this train was a most serious disaster to the enemy, destroying his baggage and ammunition, and depriving him of provisions, of which he was short. Much praise is due to the officers and men of Major Chivington's command.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the success of the Colorado troops, Colonel Canby ordered Slough and his men to remain at Fort Union. In April a frustrated Slough resigned, and after a petition endorsing Chivington and signed by all the men was presented to Canby, Chivington was appointed colonel, leapfrogging Lt. Col. Samuel F. Tappan. This event would prove significant in the coming years, as Tappan and Chivington became mortal enemies.<sup>28</sup>

Chivington's military success led him to bigger dreams. In a letter to Rev. Hugh D. Fisher, written from Fort Craig, New Mexico, Chivington described the thrill of victory: "I will tell you that I did feel about right when we whipped those Texans and especially when they knew it was a Methodist preacher after them."<sup>29</sup> Chivington's desire for power and prestige was evident as he continued:

Now my dear Hugh D. I want to tell you that having gone into this war I want to make the most of it, and I want you, if you can feel free to do so, to write to Senators Dave and Pumsay at Washington and get them to assist Mr. Bennett Delefone from Colorado in obtaining for me a Brigadier Generalship.

There will be one appointee from Colorado Ter. and it rests between John P. Slough, formerly of your city, Lecompton Democrat, Colonel Leavenworth of the 2nd Regt Col Vols and my self. Leavenworth is a Democrat of the woolly type and the meanest old whore monger and drunkard in all the mountains, so you see my competitions. Anything you can do in the way I have suggested or any other way will be appreciated and reciprocated. If I can get this appointment now after the war is over I can go to Congress or U.S. Senate easy—you may not appreciate this last but it is so.

My own Regt and more than half the 2nd are strongly urging it and will stand by me to the death. And three fourths of the people of Colorado would endorse it heartily, and of this I am not mistaken. True I have some of the "best kind of haters," but they are confined to the secessionists and Bummers & in my very

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*That crazy  
preacher who  
thinks he is  
Napoleon  
Bonaparte.*

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## *When I was Colonel of the Regiment and Chivington Major, he conspired for my assassination.*

soul I am glad they don't like me.<sup>30</sup>

Chivington went to Washington to pursue the appointment, taking with him the hearty endorsement of Colorado Governor John Evans, who wrote to President Lincoln praising Chivington "as a thoroughly loyal, bold, brave and judicious commander."<sup>31</sup>

Some newspapers reported that Chivington received the appointment. Chivington, himself, claimed that Secretary of War Edwin Stanton had offered him the appointment but he had refused. In a letter to Stanton concerning a second attempt to secure the appointment Colonel Slough said Chivington had been appointed but not confirmed.<sup>32</sup>

The second attempt came in 1863. Governor Evans sent another letter praising Chivington to the president, but Colonel Slough's letter to Secretary Stanton contained surprising and shocking allegations: "Some months ago I recommended Col. John M. Chivington . . . for promotion. . . . I desire to place myself right by withdrawing my recommendation." What followed surely gave Stanton pause:

Judge Hall late Chief Justice of Colorado has just informed me that when I was Colonel of the Regiment and Chivington Major, he and others conspired for my assassination and that the attempt was made when en route to New Mexico in February and March 1862. The object was to secure the Colonelcy to Chivington who was recognized as a better military man than the Lt. Col. and the promotion of the other conspirators. . . . The base attempt upon my life was frustrated by Providence.<sup>33</sup>

Again failing to secure the much-sought-after promotion, Chivington returned home.

It was with the conversion of the First Colorado from an infantry regiment to a cavalry regiment and Chivington's appointment as commander of the Military District of Colorado that he earned his permanent notoriety. The events leading up to and surrounding the surprise attack on Black Kettle's Cheyenne village at Sand Creek in the early dawn of November 29, 1864, have been well-chronicled elsewhere.<sup>34</sup> In brief, Chivington and approximately 700 soldiers of the Third and First Colorado Cavalry regiments charged the village, killing at

least 150 Cheyenne and Arapaho men, women, and children. The actions of the soldiers in the aftermath of the attack were even more shocking. Throughout the afternoon of the twenty-ninth and the following day the soldiers committed atrocities on the dead, scalping and mutilating the bodies. These "trophies" were returned to Denver with the troops on December 22 and paraded through the streets.<sup>35</sup>

Chivington was once again a hero—at least initially. Colorado newspapers lauded his actions—"The Colonel, as a commander, is a credit to Colorado and the West"—and those of his soldiers. Write the *Rocky Mountain News* on December 13, 1864:

The active campaign of the Third has been short but brilliant. They have been taunted as the "Bloodless Third" but the record shows that they have taken prominent part in the most effective expedition against the Indians ever carried out. The chastisement given to the savages is more severe than the celebrated threshing Harney gave the Sioux at Ash Hollow a few years since. That event struck terror into the hearts of all the Indian tribes of the Plains and if we mistake not the recent battle at Sand Creek will have a similar effect.

It did not take long for rumors of the truth of the "expedition" to come out. By December 30 some newspapers were reporting that the soldiers involved "do not scruple to say that the big battle of Sand Creek was a cold-blooded massacre."<sup>36</sup> The rumors also reached Washington, and soon three separate federal investigations—one headed by Lt. Col. Samuel F. Tappan—were launched.<sup>37</sup>

Chivington did not foresee the wrath he would incur. A contemporary remarked:

No doubt the gigantic Colonel felt as he surveyed the gory field strewn with dead savages, that he had won a brilliant victory which would cover his name with imperishable reason, and perhaps embellish his uniform with the coveted stars of a Brigadier. He had in mind also, General Harney's famous achievement at Ash Hollow in September 1855, and felt that he had eclipsed the glory of that historic massacre, but forgot that Harney gave no orders to kill everything in sight, and hence saved himself the disgrace of an indiscriminate slaughter.<sup>38</sup>



**Black Kettle, Cheyenne.**  
NARA



*Rocky Mountain News*, March 3, 1929

News of Chivington's actions at Sand Creek was commented on with great interest in his former hometown newspapers. The *People's Press* on Jan. 19, 1865, said, "Reports have reached us that Col. Chivington committed a blunder, and instead of slaughtering hostile Indians as stated in his official report, he actually attacked and killed a band of friendly Indians who, at the time were engaged in buying white persons of the hostile hands, and returning them to their friends." The *Nebraska City News* on December 31, 1864, took a contrary position and was outraged upon learning that Chivington's actions at Sand Creek were to be investigated. The paper commented:

From our telegraphic dispatches of to-day, we learn that Congress intends investigating the military acts of Colonel Chivington in the recent fight with the Indians at Fort Lyon, Colorado. Charges are preferred against him, in which it is stated, "that the Indians were killed after they had surrendered." If our National Capitol was located a little nearer the scenes of our Indian depredations, and members of Congress more familiar with the outrages perpetrated on Western settlers, by these dirty, lousy, thieving vagabonds, they

would present him with a sword, as a testimonial of their high appreciation, instead of censuring him. No matter what action Congress may take in the affair—the people of Colorado, Idaho, Montana and Nebraska will ever think he did right.<sup>39</sup>

Another item in the *News* was even more vehement in its defense of Chivington's actions:

The people of Nebraska, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, Montana and Idaho will observe the partiality of "the Government" for these prairie devils. They cannot understand why these nomadic robbers and journeyman murderers should be dealt with so tenderly, or why a man who has fought them "not wisely," perhaps, but "too well" should be arrested.

Have Indians ever spared the white man during the existing border war? Have they not murdered our little children? Have they not worse than murdered our women? Have they not, within the last six months, killed, mutilated and scalped hundreds of innocent white persons?

Col. Chivington began a retaliatory warfare and he was right; but the party "founded on a great moral idea" is shocked at his treatment of Indians, and forthwith order his arrest. Is it

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## ***Colonel Chivington ought to be tried by a court-martial and shot like a wolf.***

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because the color of an Indian assimilates that of the nigger, that he should be treated so kindly and gently? We can see no other “loyal” reason and hope that “the Government” will enlighten the people of the Great West upon this important point.<sup>40</sup>

The sacking of Julesburg, Colorado Territory, by five hundred (one source says a thousand) Indians shortly after Sand Creek, led the *Nebraska City News* to offer further justification of Chivington’s actions:

We are pleased to observe that most of the journals of the Territories are for Chivington’s style of Indian warfare and opposed to his arrest. People who have at heart the welfare of the pioneers of the West should act together in the total and utter condemnation of an Administration, that while it arrests a gallant officer for killing off Indians, permits by its in-action and negligence, the Indians to slaughter white men, women and children and destroy the habitations of its own citizens for a distance of three hundred miles—from Julesburg to Denver.<sup>41</sup>

The views of the Nebraska press were in stark contrast to the opinions of the press “back east,” such as the *Chicago Tribune* whose editorial on July 26, 1865, called the battle, “an act of hideous cruelty, garnished with all the accessories of fraud, lying, treachery and beastially [sic].” The paper recommended that “Colonel Chivington ought to be tried by a court-martial and shot like a wolf” for his actions at Sand Creek. While all three of the official inquiries into Sand Creek severely criticized his conduct, Chivington never faced a court-martial, for the simple reason that his commission had conveniently expired on January 4, 1865.

As a civilian Chivington ran for Congress from Colorado in October 1865.<sup>42</sup> The strong Union man ran as an Independent because of concerns he had regarding where the Union administration candidate, George M. Chilcote, stood on the “Sand Creek question.” Chivington’s former troops campaigned for their leader, carrying banners through the streets of Denver that blared, “For Member of Congress, J. M. Chivington,” and “Sand Creek must be vindicated.”

Chivington was warmly received at campaign appearances in Denver, including one at the People’s Theater. The *Rocky Mountain News* reported, “The boys rushed around him, pressing for an opportunity to shake him by the hand, and to congratulate him upon his return among us, and if he had not been a man of powerful muscle, we surmise his arms would be lame for a month.”<sup>43</sup>

In a somewhat unusual move Chivington challenged his Democratic opponent, James M. Cavanaugh, to a public debate. The *Rocky Mountain News* reported, “The Colonel made some good hits and argued in extenso the various reasons why his claims to a seat in Congress should be regarded as superior to those of Mr. Cavanaugh. . . . The Colonel made many excellent points in his speech, although it was evident to the most casual listener, that he was illy prepared for speaking.”<sup>44</sup>

The heat from the investigations into Sand Creek proved too much to bear, however, and Chivington withdrew from the race on November 8, 1865, and endorsed George Chilcote, saying, “I have always been a Union Administration supporter, and under no circumstances would I intentionally do any thing that would endanger the election of any man nominated by the Union Administration Convention.”<sup>45</sup>

His political aspirations dashed, Chivington had to carve out a new life for himself, including finding a new way to earn a living. The year 1866–67 found Chivington frequently on the go. A review of Colorado and Nebraska newspapers shows him constantly moving between the two states and active in freighting, politics, and religious affairs. Money was apparently Chivington’s primary concern. Thornton K. Tyson, who had served in Company A of the Third Colorado Cavalry, wrote in later years, “Col. Chivington always impressed me as a man who was inclined to live beyond his means—who wanted to maintain the pomp and style of a Major General on the pay of a Colonel. I never heard him spoken of as a man of any means, but rather as a poor man who was living beyond his means.”<sup>46</sup>

Chivington turned to the freighting business in which his son, Thomas, and son-in-law, Thomas Pollock, were already successfully engaged. The *Rocky Mountain News* reported his activities frequently, noting on March 20, 1866, “Col. Chivington’s first mule train started to Atchison [Kansas] yesterday. The Colonel will send 110 wagons in all during the coming week. He has a contract from Stebbins & Porter for transporting one million pounds of freight from Atchison to

Denver this season.” The *Nebraska City News* also kept its readers informed of Chivington’s whereabouts, writing on August 25, 1866, “Col. J. M. Chivington is in the city. He will load his train and start it westward in a few days.”

Newspapers in both Nebraska and Colorado reported the news in 1867 when Indians attacked Chivington’s wagon train. On May 17 the *Omaha Republican* reported, “We learn through Colonel Chivington, who is now in our city, that on the 2nd inst. his train was attacked by Indians on the Laramie River, about thirty miles above Fort Laramie, and thirty saddle animals, used for herding were captured. Fifteen of them were afterwards recovered. Five days afterwards the train was again attacked near Fort Mitchell, but the Indians were repulsed before they could do any damage.” Whether or not this attack actually occurred would become a matter of significant dispute in Chivington’s later years.

Chivington continued his religious activities, although he was never officially reappointed as a minister. He occasionally preached, as Plattsmouth’s *Nebraska Herald* noted on October 17, 1866: “Col. John M. Chivington, the fighting parson, preached at the M. E. Church in this city last evening. He was particularly severe on grog shops.” In April 1868 he received a special appointment as agent of the Nebraska Conference Church Extension Society and member of the Nebraska City Quarterly Conference. Chivington also kept ties to the religious community in Colorado, serving for a short time as a trustee of the Colorado Seminary. He stayed active in the Masons, and also was commander of the Grand Army of the Republic Post of Nebraska City in 1868.<sup>47</sup>

Despite his failure to obtain political office Chivington, an ardent Republican, maintained his interest in politics. In September 1866 he spoke at the Republican Convention in Brownville, Nebraska Territory. His remarks left no doubt about what he thought of the opposing political party: “If I am so fortunate as to go to Heaven I will get a pair of copper-toed square-toed stogy boots, and standing upon the battlements of paradise will kick them [the Democrats] to hell as fast as they appear; and if I go to hell, I will provide a red hot cauldron of boiling sulphur to church them in when they come there.”<sup>48</sup>

In spite of—or perhaps because of—the Sand Creek controversy, Chivington was invited to the 1866 Soldiers and Sailors Convention. The *Rocky Mountain News* reported on October 27, “He represented Colorado in the loyal Soldiers and

Sailors Convention at Pittsburg[h], and made several speeches on the occasion. We are proud of the fact that the name of Colorado, or her soldiers was not disgraced.” In June 1867 Chivington addressed the Nebraska Legislature, on “the Indian question.” The *Rocky Mountain News* reported, “his vigorous sentiments were endorsed by the members very unanimously.”<sup>49</sup>

Some Nebraska papers, however, were less charitable than the legislature seems to have been. The *Omaha Daily Herald* took notice of Chivington’s address “upon the congenial subject of Indian-murder as a pastime.” The scathing editorial went on to speak of him “as the author of deeds that in another day of our history . . . would have been called crimes—high crimes against every law of Christianity and human feeling. Viewing him as a representative mocker of humanity, we arraign and denounce his teaching as a slander upon the Christian name and a hideous insult and disgrace to human nature.”<sup>50</sup>

These years also saw a series of personal tragedies envelop Chivington. His only son, Thomas, drowned in June 1866. A ferryboat had broken loose at the crossing of the North Platte River near Fort Halleck in present Wyoming. Thomas had volunteered to help retrieve the boat, which capsized as it was being returned to the landing.<sup>51</sup>

Less than a year later two-year-old Lulu Chivington, Thomas and Sarah Chivington’s only daughter, also drowned, falling overboard from a Missouri River steamboat. The *Nebraska Herald* reported the accident:

We learn with sadness, that just at sunset yesterday, when the Mountain steamer Gallatin, having on board, Col. J. M. Chivington, and the family of the late Thos. Chivington, was opposite the lower landing, a mile from our levees—Little Lulu, aged two years and eight months—only daughter of Mrs. Chivington, accidentally fell overboard and was swept away. The steamer was standing still at the time. Lulu, under the protection of her brother Walter, had started from the state room to empty a basin of water, but unfortunately attempting to empty the contents over the side of the vessel, lost her balance and there being no guards to the steamer, fell over. Walter immediately informed his mother and in a moment all on board were alarmed with the cry, “My little girl is overboard.” The sweet little girl had by her winning manner, endeared herself to every one on board. Almost superhuman efforts were made by the Captain to recover her. The steamer falling

back two or three miles but to no avail, a skiff also plied over the spot. But she was never seen again.<sup>52</sup>

A few months after these two devastating losses John Chivington's wife, Martha, died while attending a Methodist camp meeting at Mt. Pleasant, in Cass County, Nebraska. The *Nebraska Herald* reported, "She had been ill for a long time, and was not expected to recover."<sup>53</sup>

In the aftermath of these incidents Chivington took several steps that were unholy indeed. He had been appointed as special administrator of his son's estate on July 6, 1866, and was appointed regular administrator of the estate on April 6, 1867.<sup>54</sup> These appointments in and of themselves imply no wrongdoing, but Chivington could not contain his greed, and began filing numerous claims on behalf of his son's estate. Technically Chivington was not an heir: Thomas Chivington's

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*The forty-seven-year-old  
Chivington married his  
twenty-seven-year-old  
former daughter-in-law,  
his son's widow.*

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heir was his widow, Sarah. She explained, "I was left at the time of my husband's death a widow with two children, a son that died in 1875—13 years of age, and a little daughter." She was also pregnant and noted that "six weeks after this my son Thomas M. Chivington was born."<sup>55</sup>

On September 10, 1867, in what might be seen as a diabolical plan and part of an apparent continuing effort to get money from his son's estate, Chivington resigned as the estate administrator. On May 13, 1868, to the horror of her family and to the delight of the *Nebraska City News* the forty-seven-year-old Chivington married his twenty-seven-year-old former daughter-in-law, his son's widow.

Sarah (Lull) Chivington's parents made their feelings on the marriage public in an open letter published in the *News* on June 6:

We, the undersigned, take this method to inform the public that, the Criminal act of John M. Chivington, in the marrying our daughter, Mrs. Sarah A. Chivington, the widow of Thomas M. Chivington, was unknown to us, and a thing we very much regret. Had the facts

been made known to us of the intentions—some measures would have been taken to prevent the consummation of so vile an outrage—even if violent measures were necessary. Hoping that this may be a sufficient explanation we remain, &c.

John B. Lull,  
Almira Lull

The *Omaha Weekly Herald*, a Democratic paper, published the same item, adding the following postscript: "*Omaha Republican* please copy. Rev. W. B. Slaughter please and inwardly digest."<sup>56</sup> News of the marriage was even reported in the *New York Times* on June 11, 1868, under the headline "A Strange Marriage."

Meanwhile, the formerly cordial relationship between the Nebraska press and Chivington was officially over. In the weeks following the marriage the *Nebraska City News* printed several items referring to the honeymoon trip as the "bridal tour." The paper also printed the following bit of nastiness on June 13: "It is said that the Rev. Col. marry-your-daughter Chivington had his wife's life insured in his favor for five thousand dollars, before leaving this city. We should be pained to record the death of Mrs. C." Immediately following their marriage, the Chivingtons moved to Omaha. The *Nebraska City News* reported this development with just a bit of sarcasm:

Col. Chivington of the M. E. Church North, and his accomplished bride, left for Omaha a day or two since. It is rumored that our theological and martial friend will connect himself with the *Omaha Republican* as one of its editors.

The Colonel is a writer of much vigor, and will, undoubtedly, give a much better tone to the morals of the *Republican* than has characterized the efforts of ex-Indian superintendent Taylor.

We congratulate the *Republican* and the M. E. Church North upon this muscular and ministerial inclusion to its editorial corps.<sup>57</sup>

In her later years Sarah Chivington described the couple's nine months in Omaha. "He was engaged in Washington Life ins[urance] com[pany]. of N.Y. . . . by some crooked work lost his position." The Chivingtons returned to Nebraska City where, in March 1869, the residence that Thomas and Sarah Chivington had called home erupted in flames. According to Sarah Chivington, "We returned here & shortly after the house was on fire we being at the time at Hotel no one knows how— not consumed but furniture damaged."<sup>58</sup> The

Nebraska City 4/18-1892

May 13<sup>th</sup> 1868 I was married  
to J. M. Chivington by Bishop  
Ams of the M. E. Church in  
Chicago.

Sarah Chivington

*Rocky Mountain News* reported that the house had been set aflame by an "incendiary."

There was considerable speculation that Chivington had set the fire himself to claim a four thousand dollar insurance policy. Sarah Chivington apparently suspected her husband as well. Samuel Tappan, Chivington's longtime nemesis, recounted in a letter in later years:

J. M. C. [was] suspected of being the "fire-bug." It was discovered in time and only a damage of \$175 incurred. J. M. C. claimed a loss of his uniform by the fire but as no brass buttons could be found in the ashes he gave it up. . . . the [insurance] company investigated the matter, but not being able to obtain evidence paid Mrs. C. the amount. Mrs. C. tells me J. M. C. made a great ado over this money, demanding it from her or he would do terrible things. She surrendered and gave it to him. \$175.<sup>59</sup>

After the fire the couple sold the household furniture and left town. Sarah wrote:

The proceeds took us to Washington, D.C., where he then presented claims on various points, this was the spring of '69, he managed to procure \$15,000 from Mr. Spalding a claim agent, which he afterward lost—as the Government would not acknowledge the indemnity bond. Senator Tipton's name was on it & he said he did not sign it. Part of that summer and winter we spent in N.Y. with my relatives from who he borrowed money & did not return it. The spring of '70 we returned to Washington & he spent his time trying to get money without labor.<sup>60</sup>

Sarah's abbreviated account describes the elder Chivington's attempt to claim—for the estate, he

said—compensation for several horses Thomas had lost to Indians while freighting in 1864. Chivington soon learned that Henry M. Porter, another freighter, had already been awarded a settlement in the case. However, Porter agreed to pay Chivington half the settlement if Chivington would provide an indemnifying bond. Chivington provided a bond allegedly signed by Nebraska U.S. Senator Thomas W. Tipton.

It was discovered that Tipton's signature was a forgery and that the notary seal used on the document had been stolen. Federal authorities were notified, and an indictment was sought. At this same time the *Washington Star and Chronicle* published an item concerning Chivington's arrest and subsequent appearance in police court on the charge that he "grossly insulted a lady." It was alleged that he had knocked a woman down on the street in Washington.<sup>61</sup>

Remarkably, Chivington was able to evade both the rule of law and the hand of God. In 1869 the minutes for the Nebraska Methodist Episcopal Conference noted that Chivington was brought before the conference on some unspecified charges, apparently having to do with questions of his character. The minutes stated, "J. M. Chivington's name was called and his case laid over." Further, "Brother Giddings moved that the case of J. M. Chivington, with the papers therewith, be referred to the Presiding Elder of the Nebraska City District for investigation according to the discipline and that passage of his character be dependant [sic] upon the decision of the committee. Motion carried."

*Continued on page 142*

He left for parts unknown.

Sarah Chivington

Church officials apparently determined that questions concerning Chivington's character were not severe enough to warrant his dismissal from the church. Minutes from the Nebraska Conference of 1870 stated, "J. M. Chivington's character was passed and he was granted a location." To be granted a location simply meant to be placed on inactive status.<sup>62</sup>

It is no surprise that John M. and Sarah Chivington's marriage did not last. According to Sarah, in "November 1870 I came to Nebraska City to visit my parents leaving J. M. C. in Washington attending to some claims, expecting to meet him again as soon as his business was settled. The time never came. He left for parts unknown. My clothing was held for board at the National hotel. He did not provide for me or mine." Sarah Chivington filed for divorce on July 18, 1871, on grounds of non-support. The official decree was granted on October 25, 1871.<sup>63</sup>

Sarah Chivington's poor judgment in marrying her father-in-law was compounded because Sarah's mother, Almira Lull, apparently never forgave her daughter. In a deposition taken in 1895 she stated, "Why she married her first husband's father was something I could never understand or do I believe she can either. He had some secret influence over her which she could not overcome, until after she was married to him. She lived to regret it most bitterly."<sup>64</sup>

The *Daily Tribune* of Nebraska City reported on November 12, 1903, that when Almira Lull was dying, she refused to see her daughter, saying, "May God spare me that agony." Sarah went to the Lull house anyway in the company of a police escort. Mr. Lull alleged that the police officer forced his way into the Lull home, whereupon Sarah saw her mother one last time. Mrs. Lull died on November 21, 1903.

Sarah Chivington battled illness—cancer forced the amputation of her left arm—and John M. Chivington for much of the rest of her life. When he filed pension and Indian depredation claims, Sarah willingly testified against Chivington, feeling that any financial compensation for him was unjust. She continued to reside in Nebraska City until her death on August 5, 1912. She is buried there in

Wyuka Cemetery in a plot near her parents. Sarah's only surviving child, Thomas, went on to become the president of the American Baseball League.<sup>65</sup>

Speculation varies about Chivington's whereabouts during the time when he had left Sarah "for parts unknown." He admitted in his later years that he had fled to Canada for three weeks and then to Mexico for two months. Eventually he returned to his native Ohio, apparently upon the news that his mother was ill. In an interview he said, "When I went to Ohio it was in response to a telegram informing me that my mother who had been an invalid for years, was at the point of death. Contrary to expectation, she lingered seven years, and I felt it to be my duty to remain and sustain one to whom I owed so much in her declining years."<sup>66</sup>

A Mr. P. A. Snyder told a different story to Samuel Tappan, who was conducting an investigation into Chivington's depredation claim. According to Snyder, Chivington took eighty dollars his mother had set aside for her burial expenses and spent it in Cincinnati on a suit of clothing. His mother had to be buried at the expense of the township.<sup>67</sup>

Chivington married a third time on November 25, 1873, to widow Isabella Arnzen of Cincinnati. Chivington said he had hoped to return to Denver following his marriage. "When I married my present wife, it was the understanding that we should come directly to Colorado, but she had an idea that the country was full of Indians and in a half-civilized condition, and so the years drifted by and I become [sic] a permanent citizen of Ohio."<sup>68</sup> This self-serving statement, made later in Denver, ignored the further tumult in Chivington's life.

A fire of suspicious origin destroyed the house at the newlyweds' farm in Warren County. The Chivingtons moved to Blanchester, Clinton County, Ohio, where Chivington carved out a new career, as a newspaper editor and publisher of a small newspaper, *The Press*.

On the complaint of the third Mrs. Chivington, he was arrested and brought before a court in Blanchester on charges that he had stolen a promissory note from her, forged her name to it, collected the money, then beat her when she questioned him about it. She appeared in court with a black eye and bruised face.

Years after the attack, the *Clinton County Democrat* reported, "For this brutal act, Chivington was arrested and bound over to court on charge of assault. The forgiving nature of this woman he had so brutally wronged saved him from incarceration in prison, and before the sitting of a grand jury the case was dropped, on promise by him to pay

Washington D.C. June 18<sup>th</sup> 92

what costs had accrued, but which costs to this day remain unpaid.”<sup>69</sup> Indeed, Isabella would stay married to Chivington for the rest of his life.

Chivington was once again lured by the prospect of politics. In 1883 he sought office as Republican candidate for the Ohio State Legislature, but Sand Creek again came back to haunt him. Local newspapers were extremely critical of Chivington’s role in the massacre and brought to light some of the details of his personal life, forcing Chivington’s withdrawal from the race. The *Lebanon Patriot* on August 24, 1883, published an unsigned letter that said Chivington campaigned with “the gospels in one hand and a flaming Indian scalping sword in the other.” The *Clinton County Democrat* also did not mince words:

Chivington is patronizing, oily-tongued, and understands to perfection the art of dissembling. Hypocrisy and deceit are distinguishing characteristics of his being. Virtue and honor are strangers to his moral character. Under the cloak of religion he seeks to hide the deformity of his moral nature. . . . While professing better things, and falsely claiming to be a laborer in the Master’s vineyard, he has dishonored religion by committing deeds which, when brought under the searching influence of the moral horoscope, stand out, so conspicuously, as dark and damning blotches, that unfit him to represent a people celebrated for integrity, prosperity and honor.<sup>70</sup>

Predictably, Chivington had a different explanation for his withdrawal from the race. He was convinced that his longtime enemy Samuel F. Tappan was responsible for spreading rumors about him.

One end of our county is settled very largely by Quakers, and when this story, through the instrumentality of Tappan, was brought out against me, it hurt me with them, for it seems as if they would prefer to vote for the incarnate fiend rather than for a man who had in any way hurt their peculiar pets, the Indians. The other people of the county were very strongly in my favor, for I had but little opposition in the nominating convention, and I was strongly urged not to withdraw.<sup>71</sup>

In the midst of the controversy Chivington received a welcome invitation to speak before the Pioneers of Colorado in Denver. He gave a rousing speech to the pro-Chivington crowd in September 1883, stating defiantly, “I stand by Sand Creek.”<sup>72</sup>

Chivington was so buoyed by the reception he received in Denver that he and Isabella relocated

there. He basked in the long gone glory days. He wrote a series of articles recounting his early days in the First Colorado Volunteers. He was elected president of the Colorado veterans’ association. He was called upon to preach in several Methodist churches.<sup>73</sup> He also held a series of jobs, first as under-sheriff of Arapahoe County and later as coroner. And again, controversy was not long in coming.

Washington D.C. June 18<sup>th</sup> 92  
Gen L. W. Colby,  
Dear Sir  
Yesterday in conversation with Mr Harvey J. Spalding of this city, he told me that he was Attorney for Chivington in several cases, among them me for a hay contract at Forts Mitchell and Laramie in February and March 1867- That Chivington, claimed as he remembers, to have lost some cattle, a few head, while performing his contract and the government should pay for them, but Spalding told him that a decision of the Supreme Court nullified all such claims and it would be of no use to present it. Chivington, never to him claimed to have lost any stock by Indians, from 1867 to 1869, during which they were intimate as client and Attorney. Mr Spalding permits me to refer to him in this matter. Respectfully Yours  
Sam. F. Tappan

As under-sheriff, Chivington was put on trial for perjury. The *Denver Republican* explained:

This is the case in which Colonel Chivington is said to have put in a bill for twenty-five days’ services as bailiff in the District Court at \$2.50 a day, and during a portion of that time also claimed mileage for traveling 522 miles. Thinking that this was a pretty good traveling for the bailiff of a very busy court to do in the month of May the County Commissioners investigated the account.<sup>74</sup>

After a short trial Chivington was acquitted, again seemingly benefiting from a legal technicality. The court ruled that Chivington could not be punished for perjury because of the form of the



oath that he took. Chivington's physical appearance indicated that time was catching up with the "old warrior." One newspaper noted:

The colonel is a notable figure anywhere, and in a courtroom, as a defendant in a case he presents a striking appearance with his snow white hair and beard. It was said that the colonel appeared nervous, but he was not more so than usual, for he is somewhat palsied with age, and his hands tremble all the time.<sup>75</sup>

Chivington's vast experience with dead bodies seemed to have served him well, as he went on to become coroner, at that time, apparently, a position for which one needed no medical training.

Trouble soon followed. In 1892 he was accused of stealing money from a corpse. A petition filed in Arapahoe County Court on behalf of the estate of Francesco Gallo alleged "that one J. M. Chivington has collected and received into his possession of the moneys belonging to the said Francesco Gallo, deceased, the sum of eight hundred dollars."<sup>76</sup> The court ordered Chivington to return the money, less any expenses he had incurred for his services as coroner. Chivington did not deny that he had taken the money and submitted a bill for \$182.

Chivington's last years were spent battling severe illness and the federal government. In his attempts to get a military pension in 1891, he claimed that during his service his horse had fallen on him, badly injuring his ankle, knee, and hip joints and leaving his left leg quite lame. He also claimed to suffer from chronic dysentery. His claim was denied.<sup>77</sup>

With no sense of irony, Chivington also filed a deprecation claim against the Oglala Sioux in 1891, seeking \$32,850 in damages. Assistant Attorney General L. W. Colby took on the case and filed a counter claim, asserting that the damages suffered by the Indians at Sand Creek were "an amount far exceeding in value that of the claimant's claim."<sup>78</sup> Colby appointed Sam Tappan, the perpetual thorn in Chivington's side, to lead the investigation. It would be Tappan who would accumulate much of the damning evidence of Chivington's various misdeeds. Ultimately, the government denied the claim.<sup>79</sup>

It was Chivington's failing health in the 1890s, however, not Tappan's efforts that, in the latter's words, were "driving from cover a monster."<sup>80</sup> The Colorado press reported on Chivington's condition, as death loomed. "For the past nine months Colonel Chivington has been an invalid. A cold

**John Chivington.** Frank Hall, *History of the State of Colorado*, 1889

## *We shall not look upon his like again.*

contracted last winter fastened to him with a vise-like grip and despite his herculean frame and splendid constitution his friends became aware some time ago that the end was not far distant.”<sup>81</sup>

Chivington died on October 4, 1894, at age seventy-three. A grand funeral with full Masonic honors was held at the Trinity United Methodist Church on October 7. All of Chivington’s evil deeds were conveniently forgotten or ignored on the day of his funeral. The newspapers announced, “Every ceremony connected with the burial will be in strict accordance with the Masonic ritual governing such affairs, even to depositing the body in mother earth due east and west.”<sup>82</sup> The Masonic apron that he had worn for thirty years was to be interred with him. The Rev. Robert McIntyre eulogized Chivington, saying:

The hero of Glorietta is gone from us. He was a man who walked the streets of this town, such a superb figure, that those of us who saw could not but admire. He towered above other men like a California redwood tree above the other trees of the forest, and I could never see him without envying his superb physique. We shall not look upon his like again.<sup>83</sup>

For nearly an hour following the ceremony mourners passed by his open coffin to pay their respects. Chivington’s body was laid to rest at a prominent place in Denver’s Fairmount Cemetery.

Is it important to know that John M. Chivington was a habitual liar and hypocrite? A wife-beater? A forger? A thief? An arsonist? It is as important to know these facts as it is to know that he was a charismatic military leader and a powerful Methodist minister—a “fighting parson.” The details of Chivington’s private life provide a context that rarely accompanies the still-heated discussion of the Sand Creek Massacre. What sort of man commanded the military force that butchered a sleeping Indian village? Simply stated, an evil man whose entire life was filled with evil deeds, not just a solitary one on November 29, 1864. As his eulogist put it, “The real battle ground of Chivington was the battle he fought with his own self.”<sup>84</sup> 

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For many years the only biography of John M. Chivington was *The Fighting Parson: The Biography of Colonel John M. Chivington*, by Reginald S. Craig (Los Angeles: Westernlore Press, 1959). Craig was Chivington’s great grandson (a fact he did not share with readers) and presented a biased portrait that did not reveal many of the less flattering facts about Chivington, in particular his second marriage to his own son’s widow. Somewhat surprisingly, one of Chivington’s contemporaries,

Samuel Forster Tappan, also served as a Chivington biographer of sorts. Tappan and Chivington, who had been comrades during the Civil War, became mortal enemies, and through a series of investigations Tappan headed he collected much of the documentation for what we now know about Chivington’s personal life. Tappan was probably as biased as Reginald Craig. Other historians have neglected Chivington’s full life story, merely dwelling on “the Fighting Parson” aspects. Thankfully, historian Gary L. Roberts, in his doctoral dissertation, *Sand Creek: Tragedy and Symbol* (University of Oklahoma, 1984), wrote what is probably the most accurate portrait of Chivington.

<sup>2</sup> Isaac H. Beardsley, *Echoes from Peak and Plain, or Tales of Life, War, Travel and Colorado Methodism* (Cincinnati: Curtis & Jennings, 1898), 250; Perl W. Morgan, *History of Wyandotte County, Kansas, and Its People* (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1911), 345. Chivington’s presence was also noted at the first sermon to white settlers in Kansas given by the Rev. W. H. Goode in a log cabin at Hickory Point on the Santa Fe Road on July 9, 1854. See E. F. Hollibaugh, *Biographical History of Cloud County, Kansas* (n.p.:1903), 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), Mar 3, 1929.

<sup>4</sup> *History of Buchanan County, Missouri, Containing a History of the County, Its Cities, Towns, etc.* (St. Joseph, Mo.: Union Historical Co., 1881; reprint, Cape Girardeau, Mo.: Ramfre Reprint, 1974), 485.

<sup>5</sup> John Speer, “Sketch of John Milton Chivington” (information supplied by Mrs. J. M. Chivington), Miscellaneous John M. Chivington Collection, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* Chivington apparently had one brother who did not agree with his Union beliefs. Lewis Chivington, “as strong a Southern sympathizer as Colonel Chivington was the opposite,” apparently was an organizer of “Atchison Societies,” named for U.S. Senator David Atchison of Missouri. Their aim was to make Kansas a slave state. One story has the two brothers meeting near Oregon, Missouri, after they had not seen one another in twenty-five years. John apparently recognized Lewis and engaged him in a debate over slavery. Lewis espoused pro-slavery beliefs and insisted that Kansas would become a slave state. John said it would not, because “I have prayed that way and feel that my prayer will be answered.” Allegedly Lewis still failed to recognize his own brother at this point, so John said, “I have it from the lips of the same mother back in Ohio that you and I are brothers.” Lewis replied, “Well, John, you have taken me greatly by surprise, but you had better get out of Missouri, for we intend to hang all of your class of preachers.” Lewis Chivington is thought to have died fighting in the Civil War battle of Wilson’s Creek. Will C. Ferrill, *Kansas City Journal*, 1888. . The clipping is included in one of Ferrill’s scrapbooks at the Denver Public Library, Denver, Colorado.

<sup>7</sup> Speer, “Sketch of John Milton Chivington.” This account was related to Speer by a Mr. J. H. Herzinger. While no specific account confirming this incident has been found thus far in newspapers of the time, references to similar incidents do exist. The *New York Daily Times*, Apr. 23, 1855, reported that at a meeting of two hundred citizens in Platte County, Missouri, following a riot and the burning of the local Free Soil newspaper, the *Luminary*, “it was decided by the meeting that no Methodist preacher should preach in the County on pain of being tarred and feathered for the first offense and hanged for the second.” The *Times* also reported on July 19, 1855, that at the quarterly meeting of the Methodist Church North in Platte County, some eighty men appeared. “The mob brought tar and feathers and hemp along with them. The excitement is great. These humble and pious ministers of religion will be driven out, and utter lawlessness prevail.” Several additional incidents involving threats of violence against Chivington are included in Ferrill’s previously cited article.

<sup>8</sup> Rev. David Marquette, *A History of Nebraska Methodism, First*

*Half Century, 1854–1904* (Cincinnati: The Western Methodist Book Concern Press, 1904), 26.

<sup>9</sup> Rev. James Haynes, *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Omaha and Suburbs* (Cincinnati: Cranston & Stowe, 1885), 44. See also Rev. Henry T. Davis, *Solitary Places Made Glad: Being Observations and Experiences for Thirty-Two Years in Nebraska; With Sketches and Incidents Touching the Discovery, Early Settlement, and Development of the State* (Cincinnati: Cranston & Stowe, 1890), 135.

<sup>10</sup> A. T. Andreas, *History of the State of Nebraska* (Chicago: The Western Historical Co., 1882), 726.

<sup>11</sup> *Nebraska Advertiser*, Apr. 29, 1858; Apr. 28, 1859. Brief references to Chivington can also be found in the “Diary of Rev. Martin Prichard, Year of 1858,” transcription by Athla Howard Tankersly, Nebraska State Historical Society.

<sup>12</sup> John T. Dormois, Francis M. Coleman, and Alan W. Farley, *Centennial Wyandotte Lodge No. 3, A.F. & A.M.* (Kansas City, Kan.: Wyandotte Lodge, 1954), 8; *Nebraska Advertiser*, Oct. 8, 1857; June 10, 1858; June 23, 1859; *Nebraska City News*, June 5, 1858.

<sup>13</sup> *Nebraska Advertiser*, Apr. 29, 1858. See also the *People’s Press* (Nebraska City), Jan. 12, 1860, for mention of a prayer offered by Chivington at the Odd Fellows installation.

<sup>14</sup> *Nebraska Advertiser*, June 2, 1859.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, Dec. 17, 1857.

<sup>16</sup> *Nebraska City News*, Mar. 24, 1860. Isaac Chivington was born August 22, 1824. Unlike his older brother, Isaac had a college education, having attended Augusta College in Kentucky. He became a licensed preacher of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1848. Isaac was married to Rebecca Butler on August 4, 1846. The couple had ten children.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Apr. 13, 1861. For more details on this incident, see William B. Wetherell, “History of the Reverends John M. and Isaac Chivington, in their relationship to the early Methodist Episcopal Church in Kansas and Nebraska,” a manuscript compiled from minutes of the Annual Conference of 1856 to 1857 and other material, Nebraska Methodist Historical Society, Nebraska Wesleyan University, Lincoln, NE. Isaac Chivington went on to serve the Methodist Episcopal Church for another thirty-three years in northern Missouri. He died on April 11, 1910, at St. Joseph. He was lauded in the 1910 minutes of the Methodist Episcopal Conference, “A good and true man of God has fallen.” See Raymond E. Dale, *Otoe County Pioneers: A Biographical Dictionary*, 10 vols. (Lincoln, Nebraska: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1961–65), 2:490-91; Patricia Kinney Kaufman, *My Mother’s People: To Colorado They Came* (Oregon?: Paddlewheel Press Publishers, 1994), 13–14.

<sup>18</sup> *People’s Press*, Mar. 27, 1860.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, Apr. 24, 1860.

<sup>20</sup> *Rocky Mountain News*, Nov. 6, 1860.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Craig, *The Fighting Parson*, 66; Roberts, *Sand Creek: Tragedy and Symbol*, 120.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Beardsley, *Echoes from Peak and Plain*, 243.

<sup>23</sup> Frank Hall, *History of Colorado* (Chicago: The Blakely Printing Co., 1889), 286.

<sup>24</sup> James C. Enochs, “A Clash of Ambition: The Tappan-Chivington Feud,” *Montana The Magazine of Western History* 15 (July 1965):59.

<sup>25</sup> Ovando J. Hollister, *Colorado Volunteers in New Mexico* (Chicago: R. R. Donnelley & Sons Co., 1962), 99–100.

<sup>26</sup> John M. Chivington, “The First Colorado Regiment,” Oct. 18, 1884, Bancroft Library of the University of California. Published in the *New Mexico Historical Review* 33 (April 1958): 151. Chivington wrote, “I think the hardest task I had during the war,

we bayoneted that day 1100 mules.” Other sources list the number at between five and six hundred. For more on the New Mexico Campaign of 1862, better known by its battles at Apache Canyon and Glorietta Pass, see *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), ser. 1, vol. 9:481–736.

<sup>27</sup> *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 9:535.

<sup>28</sup> The relationship between Chivington and Tappan stemming from this episode has led many historians to suggest that Tappan was furious, never forgave Chivington, and spent the rest of his life trying to ruin him. However, a comrade of the two men, Ovando J. Hollister, wrote that Tappan “generously waived his rank in favor of Major Chivington.” Ovando J. Hollister, *Boldly They Rode: A History of the First Colorado Regiment of Volunteers* (Lakewood: Colo.: The Golden Press, 1949), 89. At best the two men had a rocky relationship for a variety of reasons. For more on the Chivington-Tappan “feud,” see Enochs, “Clash of Ambition,” 58–67. Gary Roberts also provides numerous details of the two men’s relationship in his dissertation, *Sand Creek: Tragedy and Symbol*.

<sup>29</sup> John M. Chivington to Hugh D. Fisher, June 25, 1862, John M. Chivington Papers, 1862–92, M72–1128, Denver Public Library.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> John Evans to Abraham Lincoln, Oct. 1, 1862. Letters Received by the Commission Branch of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1863–1870, RG94, Records of the Office of the Adjutant General, *National Archives Microfilm Publication M1064*, roll 14 (C737 CB 1863), National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA).

<sup>32</sup> The *People’s Press*, reported on Feb. 23 and 26, 1863, that Chivington had received an appointment as brigadier general. Also Chivington related the story of his meeting with Edwin Stanton in the May 4, 1890, issue of the *Denver Republican* in his series of articles entitled, “The Pet Lambs.” In this article, Chivington wrote that Stanton offered to make him brigadier and Chivington answered, “Can’t do that; can’t do that, sir. I would rather command the First Cavalry of Colorado than to command the best brigade that you have got in the army of the Potomac.” In a letter by Col. John P. Slough to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton in 1863, Slough said that Chivington “was appointed, but not confirmed.” See Slough to Stanton, Sept. 13, 1863, *M1064*, roll 56 (S700 CB1863), NARA.

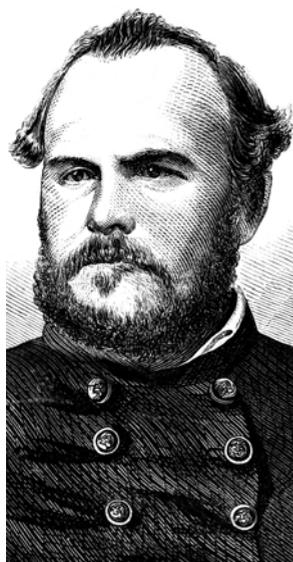
<sup>33</sup> Slough to Stanton, Sept. 13, 1863.

<sup>34</sup> Numerous studies have covered the Sand Creek Massacre. See Gary L. Roberts, *Sand Creek: Tragedy and Symbol*, and Robert M. Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue: The United States Army and the Indian, 1848-1865* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), 281-99. A concise history is also given in Jerome A. Greene and Douglas D. Scott, *Finding Sand Creek: History, Archeology, and the 1864 Massacre Site* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 3–25.

<sup>35</sup> For accounts of the return of Chivington and the Third, see *Rocky Mountain News*, Dec. 7, 10, 13, 17, 20, 22, and 29, 1864.

<sup>36</sup> *Rocky Mountain Journal* (Denver), Dec. 30, 1864.

<sup>37</sup> The records of the three investigations may be found in: *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, Massacre of the Cheyenne Indians*, 38th Cong., 2d sess., 1865, Senate Report 142, Serial 1214; *Report of the Joint Special Committee, Condition of the Indian Tribes with Appendix (The Chivington Massacre)*, 39th Cong., 2d sess., 1867, Senate Report 156, Serial 1279; and *Report of the Secretary of the War, Communicating . . . a Copy of the Evidence Taken at Denver and Fort Lyon, Colorado Territory by a Military Commission Ordered to Inquire into the Sand Creek Massacre, November 29, 1864*, 39th Cong., 2d sess., 1867, Senate Executive Document 26, Serial (1867). Chivington



tried unsuccessfully to have Tappan removed from the investigation, saying that he “for a long time past has been my open and avowed enemy.” John M. Chivington to the President and Members of the Military, July 1, 1865, Chivington’s Compiled Military Service Record, RG94, NARA.

<sup>38</sup> Hall, *History of Colorado*, 356.

<sup>39</sup> Also published in the *Rocky Mountain News*, Jan. 10, 1865.

<sup>40</sup> *Nebraska City News*, Jan. 14, 1865.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 6, 1865.

<sup>42</sup> *Rocky Mountain News*, Oct. 16, 1865. This was Chivington’s second effort. His first attempt came shortly before Sand Creek. On March 21, 1864 Congress had authorized formation of a Colorado state government. A convention was held in August to nominate candidates for state offices and one candidate for the House of Representatives. Chivington received the latter nomination, and a bitter campaign was waged. The *Daily Mining Journal* (Black Hawk) was against statehood and Chivington, and printed the following in the Sept. 9, 1864, edition: “Many predict that Col. Chivington will be the worst beat man that ever ran for office anywhere. And he needs just such a rebuke as he will surely get, for his ambition ran away with him long ago, and has caused him to do many things that would bring the blush to the face of any honest man.” Ultimately, the 1864 statehood proposal was defeated.

<sup>43</sup> *Rocky Mountain News*, Oct. 19 and 24, 1865.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, Nov. 2, 1865.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, Nov. 8, 1865.

<sup>46</sup> Rev. Thornton K. Tyson to Sarah M. Chivington, Sept. 12, 1892, included as a part of the investigation file into John M. Chivington’s Indian depredation claim against the Sioux Indians, Case 3473, Indian Depredation Case Records, Records of the Court of Claims Section (Justice), RG205, NARA. There is a second file relating to Chivington’s Indian depredation claim. It is also Case #3473; however, it is found in Records of the United States Court of Claims, RG123, NARA. Tappan supplied most of the documents during his investigation.

<sup>47</sup> *Nebraska Herald*, Apr. 9, 1868; *Rocky Mountain News*, Apr. 18, 1868; *Nebraska Advertiser*, Mar. 19, 1868.

<sup>48</sup> *Nebraska Statesman* (Lincoln), Sept. 8, 1866.

<sup>49</sup> *Rocky Mountain News*, June 20, 1867.

<sup>50</sup> *Omaha Daily Herald*, June 14, 1867.

<sup>51</sup> *Nebraska City News*, July 7, 1866.

<sup>52</sup> *Nebraska Herald*, May 8, 1867; see also *Rocky Mountain News*, May 10, 1867.

<sup>53</sup> *Nebraska Herald*, Aug. 29, 1867.

<sup>54</sup> *Nebraska City News*, Mar. 15, 1867.

<sup>55</sup> Statement of Sarah M. Chivington, Apr. 18, 1892, Case 3473, RG205, NARA.

<sup>56</sup> *Omaha Weekly Herald*, June 10, 1868. According to J. Sterling Morton’s *Illustrated History of Nebraska*, Vol. 2, (Lincoln: Jacob North and Co., 1906), 534, “In 1865 Dr. Slaughter was called to fill the pulpit of the First Methodist Episcopal church in Omaha, where he labored for three years, and from that time was actively identified with the interests of Methodism in Nebraska.”

<sup>57</sup> *Nebraska City News*, June 20, 1868.

<sup>58</sup> Sarah Chivington to Sherman Williams, Feb. 4, 1895, Widow’s Pension File 41647, Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, RG15, NARA.

<sup>59</sup> Samuel F. Tappan to L. W. Colby, Apr. 20, 1892, Case 3473, RG205, NARA.

<sup>60</sup> Sarah Chivington to Sherman Williams, Feb. 4, 1895, Widow’s Pension File 41647, NARA.

<sup>61</sup> Tappan to Colby, Apr. 20, 1892, Case 3473, RG205, NARA.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Statement of Sarah Chivington, Apr. 18, 1892, Case 3473, RG205, NARA. A copy of the divorce decree is included in this file.

<sup>64</sup> Deposition of Almira Lull, Sept. 20, 1895, found in Pension File 41647, NARA.

<sup>65</sup> *Nebraska City News*, Aug. 9, 1912. One perhaps minor point concerning the children of Sarah and Thomas Chivington is that some sources have confused Sarah and Thomas Chivington’s third child, Thomas, with their first born son, Walter. Some accounts have stated that following the elder Thomas Chivington’s death that Walter was renamed Thomas. This was not true. According to Sarah Chivington, Walter died in 1875 at the age of thirteen. Cemetery records of the Wyuka Cemetery in Nebraska City show that three persons are buried in plot 2514—Sarah Chivington, her husband Thomas Chivington, and Walter Chivington. The surviving child, Thomas Chivington, was born six weeks after his father’s death according to Sarah. This Thomas Chivington died on November 17, 1937, in Robertsdale, Alabama. Kaufman, *My Mother’s People*, 35.

<sup>66</sup> *Daily Denver Times*, Oct. 8, 1883.

<sup>67</sup> Tappan to Colby, Apr. 14, 1892, Case 3473, RG205, NARA.

<sup>68</sup> *Daily Denver Times*, Oct. 8, 1881.

<sup>69</sup> *Clinton County (Ohio) Democrat*, Aug. 17, 1883.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Daily Denver Times*, Oct. 8, 1883.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, Sept. 13, 1883.

<sup>73</sup> *Rocky Mountain News*, June 30, 1884; Oct. 23, 1885.

<sup>74</sup> *Denver Republican*, Sept. 13, 1887.

<sup>75</sup> *Rocky Mountain News*, Sept. 13, 1887.

<sup>76</sup> The court papers from the Arapahoe County Court related to this incident are included in Tappan’s investigation, Case 3473, RG123, NARA.

<sup>77</sup> Chivington’s wife Isabella pursued a widow’s pension and ultimately received it until her death. Pension File 41647, NARA.

<sup>78</sup> *Washington Post*, Jan. 18, 1892.

<sup>79</sup> The case was resolved by the defendant’s plea, which was filed by Assistant Attorney General J. G. Thompson on April 21, 1899. It stated: “At the date of the alleged depredation, to wit., on April 1, 1867, the defendant Indians were not in amity with the United States. The testimony of the claimant who details his experience with the Indians and states that he had become thoroughly acquainted with the Sioux tribe, shows that the depredation was committed by Indians belonging to the band of which Red Cloud was the chief. The court has heretofore determined in the case of Penny, No. 4634, and in the cases of Salois, No. 4800, and Leighton, No. 817 and 820, that the Ogallala and Brulé Sioux Indians were not in amity in the spring and summer of the year 1867. It is notorious that Red Cloud was at that time the leader of the hostile Sioux. It is submitted therefore that the defendants’ plea should be sustained, and the petition dismissed.” See Case 3473, RG123, NARA.

<sup>80</sup> Tappan to Colby, Apr. 14, 1892, Case 3473, RG205, NARA

<sup>81</sup> *Denver Republican*, Oct. 5, 1894.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 7, 1894.

<sup>83</sup> *Rocky Mountain Herald* (Denver), Oct. 13, 1894.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

