

**Script for School Section**  
**Prepared by Jeff Campbell, National Park Services**

**CAUTION TO BUS OPERATORS** - DEPENDING ON RECENT WEATHER THE SHOULDER SHOULD BE CONSIDERED GENERALLY SOFT!

Narrative:

[White Antelope Way is a north-south road. For your passengers who will be staying on the bus, direct their attention to the EAST.]

"We are stopping here so that you can get a panoramic view of the valley. The massacre of about 200 Cheyennes and Arapahos on 29 November extended as far to the North and Northeast as you can see from here and covered between thirty-five and fifty square miles while lasting about nine (9) hours [0630 to 1530 hours].

"You are now in the Sand Creek or "Big Sandy" creek valley. About 3/4 of mile to your East is the stream bed running approximately north-south. To your far right or Southeast you will see grain elevators at the town of Brandon and (depending on visibility) east of that are elevators at Sheridan Lake about twenty miles from here.

This area for a few miles south and a few miles north was known, and is still seen on some maps as "Water Valley" It was given this name by early homesteaders in the late 1800s because the water table or "ground water" was and is close to the ground surface. Although this is a "dry" or intermittent stream, by digging in the streambed enough water would fill troughs to water their livestock. Clean spring water was also abundant in springs dotting the landscape to your Northeast or the opposite side of this stream valley.

This place-name also goes to explaining why tribes in their regular traverse of this land stopped here and used the area as camp sites.

Before the Cheyennes and Arapahos came into this area in the early 1830s, Pawnees, Kiowas, Comanches and Arikarees were known to have used this site. In fact, the Utes would venture onto the plains this far in annual buffalo hunts. As well, traders from "Mexico" [modern New Mexico] came out here with their ox carts to trade with plains tribes. The Spanish name for this stream was Arroyo Manteca [grease or lard creek] [We don't know why they called it such.]

A feature that would have been clearly seen in the 1860s was the "Smoky Hill Lodgepole Trail" which ran from the Big Timbers on the Arkansas River to the Smoky Hill River. The generations of tribes dragging lodge poles imprinted a trail

from water hole to water hole and had been used by Chief Left Hand of the Arapahos (and his family group) in the ten days before the massacre. The trail was easy to follow, even on a moonless, but brightly starlit night like 28 November 1864 as the approximately 675 United States Volunteer Cavalry troops and scouts came across the divide to your immediate West. It was still dark and in the pre-dawn when the soldiers "struck" the Sand Creek Valley.

To your Northeast and then further to your left you will see the tops of indigenous Cottonwood trees marking the modern stream course, which are about 40 to 50 feet tall. Even if it had been daylight when the troops crossed into this valley the tops of tipis only about 12 to 16 feet high where the poles crossed could not have been seen from here.

Directly out the front of the bus and about one and one-half miles North is where we project that the lodgepole trail crossed the bluffs into the valley.

The troops led by Colonels John Chivington, George Shoup and Leavitt Bowen proceeded from this approximate location into the valley about 1 mile east of us. There the column of soldiers consolidated. Scouts who'd been out in front of the column came back and reported a village about 2 miles upstream from that location. The colonels divided their First and Third Regiment troops and sent about 300 to your front and left another half mile to the West to capture the hundreds of horses. Meanwhile the colonels sent their most experienced First Regiment troops up the valley floor and around the point of land we call "monument hill.

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