



Col. John Chivington & Sand Creek a Historical Mock Trial

Mr. Robert Bent

Biographical Information:

- occupation: **civilian rancher**
residence: **Spring Bottom, Colorado Territory**
- Robert Bent, the eldest son of William Bent (one of the founders of Bent's Fort), had been asleep on his own ranch near, when the cavalry passed through on its way to Sand Creek.
- According to his own account, he was rousted out of bed by Chivington's men and forced to guide the column of cavalry to the Cheyenne encampment.

Historical Deposition:

- Following is a partial transcript of testimony given by Robert Bent at U.S. Senate hearings.

" . . . When we came in sight of the camp I saw the American flag waving and heard Black Kettle tell the Indians to stand around the flag, and there they were huddled - men, women, and children. This was when we were within fifty yards of the Indians. I also saw a white flag raised. These flags were in so conspicuous a position that they must have been seen. When the troops fired, the Indians ran, some of the men into their lodges, probably to get their arms. They had time to get away if they had wanted to . . . I think there were six hundred Indians in all. I think there were thirty-five braves and some old men, about sixty in all. All fought well. At the time the rest of the men were away from camp, hunting . . .

After firing, the warriors put the squaws and children together, and surrounded them to protect them. I saw five squaws under a bank for shelter. When the troops came up to them they ran out and showed their persons to let the soldiers know they were squaws and begged for mercy, but the soldiers shot them all. I saw one squaw lying on the bank whose leg had been broken by a [bullet]; a soldier came up to her with a drawn sabre; she raised her arm to protect herself, when he struck, breaking her

continued

arm; she rolled over and raised her other arm, when he struck, broke it, and then left her without killing her. There seemed to be indiscriminate slaughter of men, women, and children. There were some thirty or forty squaws collected in a hold for protection; they sent out a little girl about six years old with a white flag on a stick; she had not proceeded but a few steps when she was shot and killed. All the squaws in that hold were afterwards killed, and four or five [young men] outside. The squaws offered no resistance. Everyone I saw dead was scalped. I saw one squaw cut open with an unborn child, as I thought, lying by her side. Captain Soule afterwards told me that such was the case . . . I saw a little girl about five years of age who had been hid in the sand; two soldiers discovered her, drew their pistols and shot her, and then pulled her out of the sand by the arm. I saw quite a number of infants in arms killed with their mothers . . .

I visited the battleground one month afterwards; saw the remains of a good many; counted sixty-nine, but a number had been eaten by the wolves and dogs . . ."

Testimony Summary:

- You saw both the American flag and the white flag flying above the camp.
- You believe that the flags were so obvious that every one must have seen them.
- You believe there were approximately 600 Indians in the camp.
- With the exception of 35 warriors and old men, all were women and children.
- You witnessed a variety of acts involving mutilation and cruelty.
- Everyone you saw who was dead was also scalped.
- A month after the incident, you counted the bodies of about 69 Indians at Sand Creek.