

Rocky Mountain News

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The Fort Lyon Affair

The issue of yesterday's [Rocky Mountain] News, containing the following dispatch from Washington D.C., created considerable sensation [here in Denver], particularly among the [men of the 3rd Volunteer Regiment] and others who participated in the recent campaign [against the Cheyenne] on Sand Creek.

Washington Post, December 20, 1864

"The affair at Fort Lyon, Colorado, in which Colonel Chivington destroyed a large Indian village, and all its inhabitants, is to be made the subject of congressional investigation. Letters received from high officials in Colorado say that the Indians were killed after surrendering, and that a large proportion of them were women and children."

[Anger] was loudly and [clearly] expressed [by many Denverites] ... This talk about "friendly Indians" and a "surrendered" village [is a tale for fools], and to us [in Denver], it is all [nonsense].

These [Indians], confessed murderers of the Hungate family — a man and wife and their two little babes, whose scalped and mutilated remains were seen by all our citizens — were "friendly Indians," we suppose, in the eyes of these "high officials."

The [Indians], participants in a score of other murders of peaceful settlers and travelers upon our borders and along our roads must have been friendly, or else the "high officials" wouldn't say so.

The band of marauders — in whose possession were found scores of stolen horses and mules; wagon loads of flour, coffee, sugar and tea, and rolls of cloth, books; underclothes of white women and children, stripped from their murdered victims — were probably ["peaceful"]. Probably those scalps of white men, women and children, one of them fresh, not three days taken, found drying in [the Indian] lodges, were taken in a friendly, playful manner.

But perhaps an investigation may be a good thing. It is unquestioned that the site of the Sand Creek battle was the rendezvous of the thieving and marauding bands of savages who roamed over this country last summer and fall. By all means let there be an investigation, but we advise the honorable congressional committee, who may be appointed to conduct it, to get their scalps insured before they [cross the plains] on their way [to Colorado Territory]. ♦



The Hungate Family three weeks before their murder