

THE SAND CREEK MASSACRE: MATTHEW SIMPSON AND THE BROKEN ARROW OF PATRONAGE

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On October 3, 1787, the U.S. Congress saddled the governors of “territories,” areas owned by the United States, but not yet designated as states, with the responsibility of “Superintendent of Indian Affairs.” Even though Congress discontinued the combined office in March of 1857, the practice continued until 1871.¹ The governors were given little instruction as to their precise duties, but nonetheless acted as pacificators, demographers, anthropologists, and military strategists, with Washington expecting detailed reports as to current conditions, negotiations, treaties, and all other events monitoring and narrating Native American affairs. Paramount among the territorial governors’ duties was simply keeping the Native American alive:

In summer those on reservations would often be victims of drought, so severe that they would be reduced to eating withered corn stalks and the carcasses of white men’s diseased livestock; in winter, deep snow and sub-zero weather would at times prevent the warriors from finding game, so that families would sit huddled in their lodges, too weak even to bury their dead.²

As governors, territorial appointees were responsible for the economic and political development of the territories; as superintendents of Indian Affairs, they were expected to manage Indian Affairs and protect native rights. It was virtually impossible to do both. The unofficial job description for the territorial governor was to force the Native American outside his natural habitat, to live in a domain for which he was culturally unprepared. The basic tension between Native Americans and whites was the attempted conversion of the plains natives from hunter-gatherers to farmers.³

In the 1851 Fort Laramie Treaty, the United States acknowledged Cheyenne and Arapaho claims to a huge piece of land, consisting of present day eastern Colorado, western Kansas, southeastern Wyoming, and southwestern Nebraska. And why not? Daniel Webster stated in a speech to the

¹ William N. Neil, “The Territorial Governor as Indian Superintendent in the Trans-Mississippi West,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 43 (September, 1956): 213.

² Neil, Territorial Governor: 218.

³ John Evans remembered this concept in a late life interview, “I thought it would be a pretty good idea, if we could get the Indians to raise sheep and cattle until they accumulated something to live on instead of living hand to mouth as they did.” John Evans, “Interviews and Notes”, made by Ashley Bancroft, 1889, for Hubert Howe Bancroft and used in Bancroft’s *Works and Representative Men*. Originals still in “Colorado Biography & Reference” files, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California. Hereafter, referred to as “Bancroft Interview.” Accumulation of domestic animals was a foreign concept to plains Indians.

U. S. Senate in 1838: “What do we want with the vast, worthless area, this region of savages, and wild beasts, of deserts, shifting sands and whirlwinds of dirt, of cactus, and prairie dogs. To what use could we ever hope to put these great deserts or these endless mountain ranges, impregnable and covered to their very base with eternal snow? What use have we for such a country?”⁴

In spite of Webster’s formidable acumen, he possessed little accuracy in predicting the future. He did not foresee the impending war for mineral rights, gold mines, ranch land, and ultimately, railroad right-of-ways. As in many treaties, the U.S. attempted to retract the Fort Laramie agreement and locate the Cheyenne and Arapahos in a dry, barren, forbidding southeast corner of Colorado land along a river gully known as Sand Creek, a gulch barren of water, unless one dug a hole in its deepest points. On February 18, 1861, ten chiefs, including the Cheyenne’s Black Kettle and White Antelope, met with Native American agent Albert Boone and Peace Commissioner F. B. Culver, to sign a treaty which would be highly controversial over the next five years. The controversy lay in “Article Six”:

The Arapahos, Cheyennes of the Upper Arkansas, parties to this Agreement, are anxious that all the members of their tribe shall participate in the advantages herein provided by respecting their improvements and civilization, and to that end, to induce all that are now separated to rejoin and reunite with them. It is therefore agreed that as soon as practicable, the Commissioner of Indian affairs shall cause the necessary proceedings to be adopted, to have them notified of this agreement and its advantages; and to induce them to come in and unite with their brethren, and to enable them to do so, and to sustain themselves for a reasonable time thereafter, such assistance shall be provided for them, at the expense of the tribe as may be actually necessary for that purpose; *Provided however*, that those who do not rejoin and permanently unite themselves with the tribe within one year from the date of the ratification of this treaty, shall not be entitled to the benefit of any of its stipulations.⁵

What did “rejoin and permanently unite” mean? How would this stipulation be enforced? Would there actually be a cut-off date, February 18, 1862? A few Cheyenne and Arapaho chiefs “touched the pen” to the treaty, believing that it only obligated their bands.

Immediately upon arriving in Denver, John Evans stood on the balcony of the Tremont House and to the crowd below emphasized the necessity of railroads for Colorado’s growth. The prospect of railroads called for the immediate geographical marginalization of the Native Americans, an authority vested him by the Sixth Article of the Fort Wise Treaty. Not everyone saw it that way, in particular, William Dole, Commissioner of Indian Affairs in Washington, who wrote Evans recommending “moderation,” and accused Evans of “moving too rapidly toward a policy of concentration.”⁶

⁴ Quoted in Linda Kirby, *Heritage of Heroes: Trinity United Methodist Church, 1859 -1988* (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1988), 5.

⁵ Charles K. Kappler. *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treatises* Vol. II (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 809-810.

⁶ Gary Leland Roberts, “Sand Creek: Tragedy and Symbol,” unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1984, 303.

S. E. Browne, United States Attorney for Colorado, backed Dole, ruling that the most prosperous mining sites, and even the territorial capital at Golden City, were off limits to the settlers. Browne even halted the surveys for the proposed Sand Creek habitat. It was the position of the Indian Affairs and Browne that the lands north of the South Platte and not been ceded. This was where most of the settlements were located.

I

This study centers around the intertwined lives of John Evans, Territorial Governor of Colorado; Matthew Simpson, bishop in the Methodist Episcopal Church; and John Chivington, elder in the Methodist Episcopal Church. As a clergyman, in name recognition among Americans, Matthew Simpson was second only to Henry Ward Beecher. As the most popular preacher within Methodism, Simpson's oratory quickly won him admirers, not a few of whom would rise to positions of influence such as Governor Joseph Wright of Indiana, Senator James Harlan of Iowa, and businessman, John Evans, who established prominence in Chicago. Simpson became the most influential patronage lobbyist among clergymen in all of America. He was able to secure Brigadier Generalships for Alexander Cummings and Clinton Bowen Fisk; Secretary of the Interior for James Harlan; and Governor of the Territory of Colorado for John Evans.

John Evans was born in 1814 to Rachal and David Evans in Waynesville, Ohio. Industry and piety defined the Evans family. David owned a general store and bought up surrounding real estate while his wife "stationed herself in front of the town saloon singing hymns and waiting to follow a wobbly customer home where the poor man's family looked on while she proceeded to pray fervently for his redemption."⁷ Sometime in 1841, John heard Matthew Simpson speak at Attica, and confessed that the Indiana Asbury President was "the first man that ever made my head swim in talking"⁸ Soon thereafter, he and Hannah joined the Methodist Episcopal Church, in which he would be inextricably and abundantly involved for the rest of his life.

John Evans would spend the rest of his life as a restless joiner, founder, inventor, promoter, speculator, builder, and investor. In 1848, he moved to Chicago where he speculated in Chicago real estate, land, and buildings, which would pay huge dividends. In spite of personal tragedy, the death of his first wife, and the ensuing 1857 depression, Evans forged ahead, serving on the Board of Directors for the Fort Wayne and Chicago Railroad, Chairman of the Chicago "Committee on Schools," leading the way for the founding of a "reform school," and becoming a prime mover for the creation of a "Board of Sewage Commission."⁹ The Illinois Methodists began dreaming of a university and selected Evans to serve as the President of the

⁷ Harry E. Kelsey, Jr., *Frontier Capitalist: The Life of John Evans* (Denver: State Historical Society of Colorado and the Purret Publishing Company, 1965), 5.

⁸ Kelsey, *Frontier Capitalist*, 32.

⁹ Kelsey, *Frontier Capitalist*, 77.

Trustees of North Western University. After three years of much discussion and exploration, a three-hundred seventy-nine acre farm was purchased twelve miles north of Chicago on the shore of Lake Michigan for the sum of \$25,000, which serves today as the site for Northwestern University and Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary.

In the latter part of 1857 and early 1858, Matthew Simpson almost died from some unidentifiable disease (probably malaria), which he had contracted on the Danube in Germany. The Bishop's Pittsburgh home was not the most salubrious place to recuperate. The smoky, soot-saturated city was referred to as "Hell with the lid off." During this time, Evans appealed to the Bishop to make his home in Evanston, Illinois, to which Simpson conceded.¹⁰ The move to Evanston was strange for several reasons. First, Simpson would be out on the Episcopal trail during the summer, and bracing himself against the cold winds blowing off Lake Michigan in the winter. Second, Edward R. Ames already resided in Evanston.¹¹ This would place two of the six Bishops living in the northwestern corner of the Northwest Territory, an arrangement for which there was no financial or logistical rationale. How would that work in servicing the new churches in Kansas and Nebraska, as well as the state of Texas? And, most of American Methodism was still concentrated east of the Allegheny Mountains. But the trustees of North Western¹² University, of which Evans was the chair, and the newly-formed Garrett Biblical Institute prevailed.

On January 2, 1861, Simpson was elected as President of Garrett Biblical Institute.¹³ In the 1889, Bancroft interview, Evans recalled his relationship with Simpson and the beginnings at North Western: "In talking the matter

¹⁰ Methodist Archives, DePauw University, Simpson file, Letter, March 15, 1858.

¹¹ The Rock Conference extended the following invitation to Edward Ames in 1853: "From the rapidly developing and extending character of the work in the North West, it is highly important that it should have the personal acquaintance and residence of someone of our Superintendents, therefore, resolve, that Bishop Ames is respectfully requested, and warmly invited to reside within the Bounds of the Rock River Conference," *Minutes of the Rock River Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Chicago: NW Advocate Office, 1853), 14. Simpson presided over the 1861 Rock River Conference. Garrett report to the Conference: "The Institute congratulates itself on the acceptance of Bishop Simpson of its Presidency, to which he was long ago unanimously elected. His counsel and cooperation will be invaluable to the faculty. Nor will his advice to candidates for the itinerancy in the large compass of his Episcopal duties be less important. *Minutes of the Twenty-Second Session of the Rock River Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Rockford: Register Steam Printing Establishment, 1861), 12-13. By sometime in 1861, Ames had moved back to Indianapolis. In 1862, expenses were paid only for Simpson, \$2,300.

¹² At this time, this was the correct form for Northwestern University.

¹³ The official minute of Simpson's election was recorded January 2, 1861. "The President made communication to the Board in relation to the election of the President of the Board of Instruction whereupon Mr. Judson moved that we jointly with the faculty proceed to the election of the president of the Board of Instruction, Bishop Matthew Simpson, having received the votes of all present was declared unanimously elected. On motion it was resolved that Bishop Simpson be affectionately and earnestly requested to accept the presidency of the faculty of the Garrett Bib. Institute and that he signify his acceptance at the earliest day practicable," Orrington Lunt, Sec. Board Trustees, UMA, Drew University, Simpson papers.

over, he agreed with me that it would be a good idea to start a Methodist school at Chicago, and that we should put the matter before the leading members, and I commenced working on it before I left there.”¹⁴ This means that part of Evans’ motivation for moving from Indianapolis to Chicago, was to begin a school of higher learning under Methodist aegis. One gets the impression that Simpson did not particularly desire to live in the Chicago area, and neither did he desire the presidency of Garrett Biblical Institute. He did feel a profound obligation to a person who was becoming his closest friend, John Evans.

Once the Evanston schools were up and running, Evans needed a new challenge. He approached Samuel Elbert, a member of the Nebraska delegation to the 1860 Republican Convention in Chicago asking for a “territorial appointment,” but received no reply. Evans had great plans for railroad development, which was part of his motive for wanting to be governor of Nebraska. Simpson enlisted the aid of Henry Lane, James Harlan, Lyman Trumbull and others for Evans. Lincoln appointed Alvin Saunders because of prior obligations.

Early in his administration, Abraham Lincoln discovered that he was in political debt to the Methodist Episcopal Church, which more than any single group, other than the Republican Party, had put him in office. The Territory of Washington was the first available political prize, but John Evans thought the area to be too far from Chicago. Thus, on October 7, 1861, Lincoln wrote the following to General William Pickering:

You wish to be Governor of Washington. Last spring when I appointed Dr. Jayne, I was greatly pressed to appoint a man presented by the Methodist people through Bishop Simpson & others, and I then said, if I should appoint another Governor of a Territory from Illinois, it should be their man. I do not *know* that their man will accept that to Washington, but it must be offered to him, and if he declines it, you may have it.

Your Obt. Servant, A Lincoln.¹⁵

John Evans rejected the appointment because it was so far away from his interests, and Pickering’s governorship of the Washington Territory was confirmed by the Senate on December 19, 1861. What kind of pressure Evans placed on Simpson to run interference for his political ambitions is unknown, but history has preserved two letters from Simpson to Abraham Lincoln on behalf of Evans. Simpson’s simple, unadorned, and undated note to Lincoln read: “It will be a matter of peculiar gratification if you, in your wisdom, see fit to appoint Dr. Evans to any of the Western Territories, either Nebraska or Colorado. His appt would not only gratify me, but his many friends.”¹⁶

Simpson did not exaggerate the “many friends.” On December 28, 1860, a letter of recommendation was sent to Lincoln from Omaha City, signed

¹⁴ Bancroft Interview.

¹⁵ Roy P. Basler, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* Vol. IV (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1959), 550.

¹⁶ Simpson to Abraham Lincoln, Department of State: Applications and Recommendations for Office 1861-1869, National Archives. These letters are alphabetized in the order for whom they were written, not by whom the letter was written.

by twenty members of the Nebraska House of Representatives, including Schuyler Colfax and Samuel Elbert.¹⁷ Robert Lumas, editor of the *Nebraska Advertiser*, made sure Lincoln knew that Evans was the choice for “nine-tenths of the Republican Party.”¹⁸ John Evans followed up both the Nebraska House and Lumas letter with, “Please allow the recommendations filed in the department as Governor of Nebraska to be changed to that they may be considered as an application for the office of Governor of the Territory of Colorado and will be much obliged.”¹⁹

Again Simpson wrote Lincoln, this time stating some of Evans’ qualifications: “By his business habits, his intellectual power, and his strict integrity, he is well fit for such a position.”²⁰ On March 15, 1861, Congressman, Harry Lane, sent a letter signed by, “Senators and Representatives from Indiana,” recommending “Dr. John Evans of Evanston, Illinois, for appointment as Governor of Colorado Territory.” On the same date, Senator James Harlan, wrote the terse request, “To the President, I must cheerfully recommend the appointment of Dr. John Evans of Evanston to the Office of Governor of the Colorado Territory.”²¹ Harlan’s appeal was a follow-up to a request that Evans had made six weeks earlier.

Dear Sir, I heard that the Gov. of Colorado is likely to vacate. If he does, I would like for Mr. Lincoln to know that I would be glad to accept the place. There will be a host of applicants I suppose and he may not appreciate my claim unless his attention is called to it. You know all the circumstances and if not too much trouble I would thank you to speak to the President on the subject (if not already too late) before action is had in the case.²²

Ultimately, the political pressure came to fruition. Lincoln nominated Evans to the Senate which approved him, and on March 26, 1862, Lincoln signed Evans’ appointment as Governor of Colorado and Superintendent of Indian Affairs. This particular decision, which had been highly leveraged by Simpson, would boomerang on the Bishop and leave American Methodism

¹⁷ Applications and Recommendations, December 28, 1860.

¹⁸ Applications and Recommendations, January 31, 1861. Also see “Lincoln and the Territorial Patronage: The Ascendancy of the Radicals in the West,” by Vincent G. Tegeder. Tegeder concludes: “With favorable governors in every one of the territories, well-disposed secretaries, amenable judges, a speculator as customs collector in Washington Territory, and sharp surveyor generals, the radicals were prepared to reconstruct the West for their own benefit and the northern interest which they represented. The radicals could use their territorial allies to promote the supremacy of the Republican party in the West, to create new territories and states for their political and economic advantage, to control the disposition of the public domain, and to foster the domination of the Trans-Mississippi Region by northern political, mining, railroad, and other economic interests. In many of their political activities the radicals used the territories as ‘pilot plants’ for the later reconstruction of the South,” Vincent G. Tegeder. “Lincoln and the Territorial Patronage: The Ascendancy of the Radicals in the West,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 35.1 (June, 1948), 90.

¹⁹ Applications and Recommendations, n.d.

²⁰ Applications and Recommendations, n.d. This letter was also signed by Methodist and Supreme Court Justice, John McClean.

²¹ Applications and Recommendations, March 15, 1861.

²² Applications and Recommendations, January 30, 1861.

with perhaps the darkest blight on the entirety of its American history. Gary Roberts assesses that Evans' "appointment gave Lincoln an opportunity to pay off a large political debt, satisfied the powerful Methodist lobby within the party, and gave the President a dependable friend in one of the most strategic territories in the West."²³ To William Seward, Lincoln wrote, March 28, 1862, "I believe Dr. Evans has already been appointed Governor of Colorado. If not, let it be done at once."²⁴

II

In October of 1862, Evans traveled to Washington to appeal to William P. Dole, to send sufficient federal troops to guard his territory. It was unlikely that the Union, fighting for its very survival, would send troops to put out sporadic fires 2000 miles away. Longstanding feuds between the Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Utes would just have to work themselves out. According to historian William E. Unrau, "A novice commissioner in distant Washington," had shifted the onus to Governor Evans for an "explosive state of affairs and to find a scapegoat in the event that hostilities became a reality." Evans attempted to enforce the 1861 Treaty of Fort Wise, but there were no resources for settling the Arapaho and Cheyenne on the banks of the upper Arkansas River. Evans was also faced with fixing boundaries, "an unenviable task in a region with traditions of vigilante justice, and petty localism in judicial procedure."²⁵ Evans did not understand the limits of the Fort Wise Treaty. Once they were clear, he sought ways to evade them.

When Ute Indians stole livestock from a stage station, and Arapaho stole horses from a rancher, Evans beseeched Colonel John Chivington to "intervene but avoid any collision with the Indians or any cause of ill feeling." In order for Chivington to intervene, Evans placed the Methodist preacher in charge of the First Colorado.²⁶ No doubt, this initiative was spurred by the fact that in late August and early September, 1862, the Sioux of Minnesota had killed some 450-800 white men, women, and children in the approximate time frame of one month.²⁷ There was no widespread violence in Colorado while the first violence was by Colorado troops. Most of the violence was in Nebraska and Kansas.

By 1864, the Colorado Territory was caught in the violence resulting from the Native American response to marginalization, and the threat of complete

²³ Roberts. 318.

²⁴ Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years*, Vol. I, 310. In the "Bancroft interview," Evans gave no one credit for running political interference. In his perception, he had won the appointment on his own merit. Frank Blair had said to Lincoln, "If you have any friend that you know to be a good businessman, appoint him to that place. I have no one to recommend. ... Lincoln told I. N. Arnold to communicate with me and see if I would accept the position, if he would appoint me, which he did by telegraph."

²⁵ William E. Unrau, "A Prelude to War," *The Colorado Magazine* 41 (Fall, 1964): 311, 308-309.

²⁶ *Report of the John Evans Study Committee*, Northwestern University, May 2014, 55-56. <http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/committees/john-evans-study/study-committee-report.pdf>

²⁷ Kenneth Carley, *The Sioux Uprising of 1862* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1961).

extinction. Thirty miles outside of Denver, on June 11, the Hungate family was massacred.²⁸ It was not clear who killed them but it was blamed on the Arapahos. In response, Evans decided to distribute an encyclical: "To the friendly Indians on the plains, appealing to all Indians to turn themselves in to Major Colley, US Indian Agent at Fort Lyon, who will give them provisions and show them a place of safety." Thus, friendly Native Americans would not be killed through mistake. "The families of those who have gone to war with the whites must be kept away from the friendly Indians."²⁹ John Evans was going to put out a fire which raged over 100,000 square miles with an ink pen. The entreaty was dated June 27, 1864, and on August 8, the "friendly Indians" responded by murdering 30 persons between Denver and Leavenworth.³⁰

III

John Chivington distinguished himself at the Battle of Glorieta Pass (Apache Canyon) March 28, 1862, riding among his troops, "wielding a pistol and shouting orders." With his 6 feet, 4½ inch, frame decked out in full regimental, the major made a splendid target, but somehow he managed to stay out of the way of the numerous Texas missiles that were aimed in his direction.³¹ A contemporary stated that "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 discrete boldness, dash, and brilliancy in action, which distinguished the more illustrious of our volunteer officers during the war."³²

Born in Warren County, Ohio, in 1821, John was raised in a pious home. In 1840, he married Martha Rollason, and both of them became Methodists at a camp meeting in southern Ohio in the summer of 1842. Roberts states that as a young man, Chivington earned his living as a "purse fighter" along the river towns, and "From that roughhouse apprenticeship Chivington found his way into the battle against Satan."³³ During the next two years John completed the "course of study" and began pastoring the Zoar Church of the Goshen Circuit, Ohio Conference. In 1846, Chivington joined the

²⁸ *The Commonwealth*, June 15, 1864, "Indian Depredations: Murder of an Entire Family," included in Scott Williams, *The Indian Wars of 1864 through the Sand Creek Massacre* (Aurora, CO: Pick of Ware Publishing, 1997), 40-43.

²⁹ Williams, *The Indian Wars*, 67.

³⁰ Report of Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, Washington: Government Printing Office, November 25, 1864, 254. From the collection of the Prelinger Library, San Francisco, CA 2006.

³¹ Thomas S. Edrington and John Taylor, *The Battle of Glorieta Pass: A Gettysburg in the West, March 26-28, 1862* (Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1998), 47.

³² Reginald Craig, *The Fighting Parson: The Biography of Colonel John M. Chivington* (Los Angeles: Western Lore Press, 1959), 19. Craig's hagiography on Chivington has to be read with caution. Craig was Chivington's great-grandson. However, it is the only full biography on Chivington. Though Evans and Chivington were from the same county, there is no evidence they knew each other before Colorado days.

³³ Roberts, 116.

newly organized Masonic Lodge in Buttersville, Ohio. In June of 1848, he accepted a charge in Quincy, Illinois. Indeed, Chivington was a man's preacher, demonstrating his machismo when he won a showdown with a federal marshal, who attempted to enact the fugitive slave law on a mulatto girl, whom the pastor and his wife had ensconced in the parsonage. John Chivington throughout his life never backed down from a fight, at least when he thought the cause worth defending. Chivington in 1853 became a missionary to the Wyandotte Native Americans in what is now the general area of Kansas City.³⁴

As the "border war" heated up after the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Chivington became a vocal supporter of "free soil," not the "state sovereignty," which had been advocated by Daniel Webster, and ultimately, Stephen Douglas. When Chivington received a threat from pro-slavery elements headquartered in LeCompton, Kansas, warning him not to continue preaching in St. Joe where he was stationed, he laid two pistols on each side of his Bible. Standing in the pulpit, the "Fighting Parson" declared in a deep bass voice, "By the grace of God and these two revolvers, I am going to preach here today."³⁵ In 1856, Chivington was appointed presiding elder of the Omaha District in the Kansas-Nebraska Conference of the Methodist Church. Chivington was as impressive as a raw pastor as he was a raw soldier. William Goode wrote for the *Western Christian Advocate* in 1854, "Our Wyandotte Mission is prospering under the fearless and faithful labors of Reverend J. M. Chivington. I should think it should take several United States agents to drive him from here."³⁶

Meanwhile, gold was discovered in Colorado, and with the rush of prospectors and the resulting boomtown of Denver, the Methodist Episcopal Church sent Chivington, March, 1860, to Denver as the presiding elder of the newly formed Rocky Mountain District. In 1859, the city consisted of 31 saloons and no churches, schools, hospitals, libraries or banks. It was in that year that Methodism sent Jacob Adriance, the "Father of Colorado Methodism," to Denver, who discovered that "few cared for religion; trading and trafficking, drinking and gambling were the order of the day . . . Sundays included. The town's people resorted to vigilante action to maintain order."³⁷ John Chivington and frontier Denver were a perfect match, a vigilante preacher in a vigilante town. Gary Roberts give the following characterization:

Beyond his awesome physical size, beyond his thunderclap voice, beyond his piercing dark eyes that seemed to know everything, Chivington overwhelmed if not intimidated those who knew him. He excited both adulation and hatred. He inspired both respect and fear. He was a storm center from the moment he arrived in the min-

³⁴ Craig, 35.

³⁵ John Speer, "Sketch of John Chivington," in a report to Fred Martin from an interview with Mrs. John M. Chivington (Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, KS, March 11, 1902), 10-11.

³⁶ Quoted from Wade Barclay, *History of Methodist Missions: Widening Horizons, 1845-95*, Vol. III (New York: The Board of Mission of the Methodist Church, 1957), 344.

³⁷ Kirby, 10.

ing camps, pulling to him many who followed him with unswerving loyalty and repelling others who found in his charismatic leadership something strangely sinister.³⁸

Chivington's best pastoral work was done in the Colorado District while it was still included in the Kansas Conference. Leaving Omaha on April 9, 1860, with a wife, two daughters and a son, John Chivington arrived in Denver and immediately held a worship service in a grove of cottonwood trees in the downtown area (which looked like anything but downtown). On May 23, 1860, the *Rocky Mountain News* reported, "Rev. J. M. Chivington, presiding elder of the Methodist Episcopal Church North, for the Rocky Mountain district, Kansas and Nebraska conference, arrived with his family of Saturday last and has taken up his residence in the city. In a very short time, he will arrange and systematize his work throughout the whole district."³⁹ The newspaper did not overestimate Chivington's competence or commitment. "Under his aggressive leadership the membership grew to 348 in 1861, with seven circuits as gateways to the mountains—Denver, Golden, Colorado Springs, and Canon City and in the mountain mining camps."⁴⁰

Duane Smith is probably accurate:

Chivington was an ideal choice for the new Rocky Mountain District. Having survived and prospered under trying times, he had acquired experience to establish Methodism in the gold fields. He relished hard work and travel, knew how to organize and run a scattered district, and displayed leadership abilities and was . . . a power for good and was a strong preacher. The man and his future had met.⁴¹

Getting to the mountain towns and then finding a place to preach demanded raw initiative. Forwardness, intrusion, intimidation, and proactivity were all aptitudes to be applied. Self-assertion and gospel proclamation were almost one and the same thing, and Chivington's ego adapted to the task. The businesses of saloons and gambling halls, "[f]requently offered the best and largest building in the camp . . . [A] frontier clergyman had to be able to adjust to unusual circumstances and be able to meet his people, who came from all walks of life on their own ground."⁴²

Sometime in September of 1861, Governor Gilpin offered Chivington a commission as a chaplain, to which the presiding Elder responded that he felt, "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."⁴³ Immediately, Chivington was commissioned a major of a regiment. Within two months he was stationed at Camp Weld on the south Platte River, two

³⁸ Roberts, 116.

³⁹ Biographical Collection, Rev. J. M. Chivington, History Colorado, Denver, Colorado.

⁴⁰ Kirby, 10.

⁴¹ Duane Smith, "Colorado's Joshua: John Chivington's Forgotten Years, 1860-1861," *Methodist History* 29.3 (April, 1991): 166.

⁴² Smith, "Colorado's Joshua": 169.

⁴³ Roberts, 120.

miles north of Denver.

Chivington and his men did not see any action until February 22, 1862, when the First Colorado set out to reinforce Colonel Canby at Fort Union in New Mexico. This trip ended with Chivington distinguishing himself at Apache Canyon, about which a Texas prisoner wrote to his wife, "On they came to what I supposed was destruction; but nothing like lead or iron seemed to stop them, for we were pouring it into them from every side like hail in a storm. In a moment these devils had run the gauntlet for half a mile and were fighting hand to hand with our men in the road." Another Confederate reported that he had "emptied his revolver three times" at the major (who had a pistol in each hand) and ordered his company to fire a volley at him but "he galloped unhurt through the storm of bullets."⁴⁴ However Chivington is evaluated, for better or worse, he was a leader. William Clarke Whitford, Glorieta scholar, wrote that Chivington in action,

. . . became the incarnation of war. The bravest of the brave, a giant in stature and a whirlwind in strife, he had also the rather unusual qualities that go to make soldiers personally love such a leader and eager to follow him into the jaws of death. The admiration and devotion of this man became unbounded. He was their ideal of a dashing, fearless fighting commander.⁴⁵

Chivington, after returning to Denver, traveled to Washington where he personally met with Edwin Stanton, requesting that his regiment be transferred to the eastern sphere of the war. Stanton denied the request, but offered to make Chivington a brigadier general training new troops in Washington. Chivington replied, "I would rather command the First Cavalry of Colorado than the best brigade in the Army of the Potomac."⁴⁶ Chivington returned to Colorado, but kept the brigadier general offer in mind. By the time that Chivington could get back to Stanton, the Secretary of War changed his mind because John Slough, Chivington's only competition for the generalship, had accused Chivington of attempting to murder him. Slough communicated the accusation to Stanton, a letter that effectively ended Chivington's promotions.⁴⁷

Previous to the Sand Creek disaster, there were several encounters between Simpson and Chivington, but as to when they were first acquainted is difficult to determine. Chivington was a delegate to the 1856 General Conference at Indianapolis, and even if the two men did not speak to one another, Simpson would have certainly taken note of the most predominant,

⁴⁴ Craig, 105.

⁴⁵ William Clarke Whitford, *Colorado Volunteers in the Civil War: The New Mexico Campaign in 1862* (Glorieta, Mexico: Rio Grande Press, 1971), 52. Also see F. Stanley, *The Civil War in New Mexico* (Denver: World Press, 1960), 194, and Ray Colton, *The Civil War in the Western Territories* (Norman, OK: U of Oklahoma P, 1959), 69-75.

⁴⁶ Craig, 142.

⁴⁷ Lori Cox-Paul, "John M. Chivington, 'The Reverend Colonel,' 'Marry Your Daughter,' 'Sand Creek Massacre,'" *Nebraska History* 8.4 (Winter, 2007): 32.

physical presence at the Conference.⁴⁸ What is clear is that by March of 1862, Simpson was fully aware of Chivington's ministerial and military status, because he presided over the Kansas Conference and "located" Chivington, that is, allowed him to retain his ministerial credentials, while at the same time serving in the military. Obviously the Methodists were not pacifists. On November 1, 1862, Matthew informed Ellen that he met Col. Chivington at the Pittsburgh depot in Chicago.⁴⁹ Somewhere along the way, Chivington had offered Matthew's son, Charles, a job in the Colorado mines, no doubt a clerical position. The father did not want his son going to Colorado, but instead procured him a job with Thomas Carlton at the New York Book Concern.

On December 30, 1863, Chivington wrote Simpson requesting the Bishop to, "Stir up the pure mind of the President about my brigadiership."⁵⁰ It is doubtful that Simpson intervened on Chivington's behalf, and even if he did, Stanton as we have seen, already had his reasons for rejecting the appeal. Chivington mustered out of the Army as a Colonel, January, 1865.

IV

Conflict took place between May 16 and Sept 25, 1864, which involved killing between fifteen and twenty persons, plus thieving, burning, and general destruction of property. Native American attacks on settlements and wagon routes in Kansas, Nebraska, and Colorado were interpreted as blessings by the Confederates, anything to absorb the Union's energy and attention. On September 28, Evans met with seven chiefs from the Arapaho and Cheyenne tribes at Camp Weld. According to Simeon Whitely, an agent for the Utes, serving as recording secretary, Evans was not interested in making peace and said that "soon the plains would swarm with United States soldiers." After much questioning about recent events, the chiefs blamed most of the depredations on other tribes. The Cheyenne and Arapahos, hugging Evans and Major Wynkoop, had their pictures taken, and left much more confident than they should have. Dole stated in his annual report of November 15, 1864, that

This course seems, from the paper accompanying Governor Evans' report, to have commended itself to Major General Curtis as the proper one to be pursued, that of-
fice deeming it necessary, in order to a permanent peace and the future good behav-
ior of the Indians, that they shall receive further punishment; and Governor Evans
advocates the policy of a winter expedition against the offending tribes.⁵¹

General Curtis evidently considered Major Edward Wynkoop, the Fort Lyon commanding officer, too soft on the Native Americans and replaced him with Major Scott Anthony. (The name of Fort Wise had been changed

⁴⁸ *Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church held in Indianapolis*, Vol. III, 1848-1846 (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1856), 5.

⁴⁹ UMA, Drew University, Simpson papers, Letter, November 1, 1862.

⁵⁰ UMA, Drew University, Simpson papers, Letter, December 30, 1863.

⁵¹ Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1864, 23.

to Fort Lyon, after Nathaniel Lyon, the first Union General killed in the Civil War, at the Battle of Wilson's Creek, just outside of Springfield, Missouri, August 10, 1861.) Shortly after accepting his post on November 5, Anthony met with Native American leaders at Fort Lyon, telling them that "he had found things quite different than he had expected (more peaceful) and he would do everything he could to make a lasting peace. In the meantime, the Indians were to remain at Sand Creek where their men could hunt buffalo."⁵² Again, the Native Americans departed with false assumptions. Wynkoop and Anthony considered them as protected. Even Curtis referred to them as prisoners.

In August of 1864, Edwin Stanton granted John Evans the permission to create the Third Colorado, a regiment of "one-hundred day" volunteers. It may have been this one action which implicated John Evans in the Sand Creek Massacre more than anything else. On September 26, John Evans met with Edward Wynkoop, and Wynkoop later recalled that the Governor asserted that the Colorado Third had "been raised to kill Indians, and they must kill Indians." Evans then asked, "Well, what should I do with the Third Regiment, if I make peace?"⁵³

Chivington left Denver with elements of the First Colorado Calvary and Third Regiment on November 23. It was a remarkable march considering that approximately one hundred fifty miles was in snow between six inches and two feet deep. After Chivington was fully provisioned by Anthony, Captain Silas Soule and other officers at Fort Lyon passionately remonstrated with both Chivington and Anthony, calling the intended attack on the Sand Creek encampment "murder." Chivington responded that he believed "it to be right or honorable to use any means under God's heaven to kill Indians that would kill women and children and damn any man that was in sympathy with Indians; and such men as Major Wynkoop and myself had better get out of the United States service."⁵⁴ At eight o'clock p.m., over 800 men, including 125 men from Fort Lyon armed with over 135,000 rifle and pistol cartridges, departed for the forty mile hike almost directly north toward Sand Creek.

The next morning at 6 a.m., Chivington and his army were staring down on a sleeping encampment of 500 Native Americans, and what has become historically known as the "Sand Creek Massacre," occurred.

V

Edwin Stanton ordered an investigation of Sand Creek and the hearings convened in Denver on February 9, 1865, and adjourned on May 30, seventy-six days later. Samuel F. Tappan, assisted by Edwin Jacoben and George Stillwell, chaired the proceedings. The court attempted to answer three questions: Did Chivington conduct himself according to the recognized

⁵² Stan Hoig, *The Sand Creek Massacre* (Norman, OK: U of Oklahoma P, 1974), 125.

⁵³ *John Evans Study Committee*, 69.

⁵⁴ Hoig, 143.

rules of “civilized warfare”? Had prior commitments been made by the U.S. Government concerning protection of the Native Americans? Were prisoners and property that were taken, properly disposed of? The commission stated its scope and limitations in that it did not intend to try any person, “but simply to investigate and accumulate facts called for by the Government, to fix the responsibility, if any, and to insure justice to all parties.”⁵⁵

The witnesses varied according to their prejudice against or support of John Chivington. There were repeated attempts to assess how many Native Americans were at Sand Creek, and what proportion of them were women and children. The majority of witnesses assessed approximately 500 Native Americans present on the morning of the attack, with two thirds of them being women and children. The preponderance of the testimony estimated that two thirds of those killed were women and children.⁵⁶

The most negative witnesses concerning both Chivington and Anthony were Silas Soule, who took the stand first and longest (seven days) and Edward Wynkoop. Both men were convinced that Anthony had double-crossed the Native Americans. Wynkoop recalled that,

Previous to the slaughter commencing, he (Chivington) addressed his command, arousing in them by his language all their worst passions, urging them on to the work of committing all these diabolical outrages. Knowing himself all the circumstances of these Indians, resting in the assurance of protection from this government given them by myself and Major S. J. Anthony, he kept his command in entire ignorance of the same, and when it was suggested that such might be the case, he denied it, positively stating that they were still continuing their depredations, and lay there threatening the fort.⁵⁷

In other words, Anthony was fully aware of Chivington’s intentions, did nothing to dissuade him, and even went with him as a combatant. When Anthony told Soule that “some of those Indians ought to be killed, that he had been only waiting for a good chance to pitch in to them,” Soule reminded him of the “pledges” he had made to the Indians. The fort commander responded that the expedition was only for the purpose of following the Indians up, and that Soule should not “compromise himself” by going out.⁵⁸ Anthony was angry when Chivington did not move against other Cheyenne and Arapahos.

While the “investigative committee” met in Denver, “The Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War (Civil War) met in Washington, March 15-17, to inquire into what exactly had happened at Sand Creek. It con-

⁵⁵ United States Army, Courts of Inquiry, Sand Creek Massacre, 1864, Report of the Secretary of War Communicating in Compliance with a Resolution of the Senate of February 4th, 1867, a copy of the evidence taken at Denver and Fort Lyon Territory by a Military Commission Ordered to Inquire into the Sand Creek Massacre, November, 1864. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1867 Senate Executive Document, November 26, 39th Congress, 2nd Session. Copyright Christopher H. Wynkoop. Hereafter, referred to as Sand Creek Massacre Investigation.

⁵⁶ United States Army, 14, 110, 112.

⁵⁷ United States Army, 123.

⁵⁸ United States Army, 125.

demned both Evans and Chivington before the Denver committee had concluded its business. Ironically, the Washington committee did not interview Chivington, and the Denver investigation did not question Evans. In fact, the congressmen did not personally meet with anyone who was present at Sand Creek, November 29, 1864, other than Scott Anthony and John Smith. The congressmen relied on newspaper articles, depositions, letters, Evans' obfuscation, and "reports and dispatches." Throughout the war, the committee consisted of various members, but serving on the committee at the time of the Sand Creek inquiry were Senator Benjamin Wade, Chairman; Senator Charles Buckalew; and Representatives Daniel Gooch and Benjamin Loan. The committee was given liberty to investigate all matters and events in the Civil War, especially if it suspected malfeasance or ineptitude within the Army of the Potomac, and much of the time, was at odds with the President. "Sand Creek" was somewhat of an excursus, the only "Indian event" investigated by the committee.⁵⁹

Evans' testimony was riddled with "I think so," "difficult to say," "I should have to guess," "I gave no orders," "I had no authority," "I have no official knowledge," "that I could not say," "I do not know." The Congressional Committee censured John Evans by concluding that his testimony was "characterized by such prevarication and shuffling as has been shown by no witness they have examined during the four years they have been engaged in their investigations; and for the evident purpose of avoiding the admission that he was fully aware that the Indians massacred so brutally at Sand Creek were then, and had been, actuated by the most friendly feelings towards the whites, and had done all in their power to restrain those less friendly disposed."⁶⁰ The committee's harshest condemnation was reserved for Chivington who,

Wearing the uniform of the United States which should be the emblem of justice and humanity: holding the important position of commander of a military district, and therefore having the honor of the government to that extent in his keeping, he deliberately planned and executed a foul and dastardly massacre which would have disgraced the veriest savage among those who were the victims of his cruelty. Having full knowledge of their friendly character, having himself been instrumental to some extent in placing them in their position of fancied security, he took advantage of their inapprehension and defenseless condition to gratify the worst passions that ever cursed the heart of man.⁶¹

On August 6, 1865, John Evans wrote an open letter in response to the accusation of "prevarication" and the Congressional Committee's assessment that the Native Americans of Sand Creek were "peaceful." In defending himself, Evans only further implicated himself. Almost the entirety of Evans's sixteen-page justification of Sand Creek implied that the Native Americans

⁵⁹ Bruce Tap, *Over Lincoln's Shoulder: Committee on the Conduct of the War* (Lawrence, KS: UP, 1998), 232.

⁶⁰ "Massacre of the Cheyenne Indians," Report on the Conduct of the War, 38th Congress, 2nd Session (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1865), 9-10.

⁶¹ "Massacre of the Cheyenne Indians, IV.

got what they deserved. Evans took issue with the committee that “he was fully aware that the Indians massacred so brutally at Sand Creek were then and had been actuated by the most friendly feelings towards the whites.”⁶² Evans never explicitly endorsed Sand Creek but defended his actions and tried to defend the honor of Colorado soldiers. Evans quoted from a conversation with Robert North on November 16, 1863, in which North had reported “the Comanches, Apache, Kiowa, the northern band of Arapaho, and all the Cheyenne, and the Sioux have pledged one another to go to war with the whites as soon as they can procure ammunition in the spring.”⁶³

Harry E. Kelsey, Jr., Evans’ biographer, argued that the Governor knew nothing about John Chivington’s plans to attack the sleeping Native Americans in the dawn hours of November 29, 1864. Gary Roberts is in agreement:

John Milton Chivington conceived and carried out the Sand Creek expedition in an atmosphere of utmost secrecy. For two weeks in late November, the 3rd Colorado Cavalry seemed to vanish along with the Methodist Colonel. Chivington kept his plans from John Evans, General Connor, General Curtis and the press.⁶⁴

Obviously, it is easier to offer evidence for what someone knows, than for what they do not know. The absence of evidence is not the evidence of absence. Even if Evans did have foreknowledge of the impending attack, he would have never imagined, much less predicted, the brutal and sadistic atrocities inflicted by the Methodist preacher and his troops.

Upon learning of Evans’ condemnation by the Congressional Committee, Simpson went to Washington to plead with the President for the Governor’s retention. Johnson was sick, and the Bishop had to content himself with meeting with the Secretary of the Interior, James Harlan. He also sought help from William H. Seward, Secretary of State. Harlan, in turn, upon gaining access to Johnson, informed the President that Evans was in Washington “at the time of the massacre and had nothing to do with it.” Simpson closed his June 28, 1865 letter to Evans with, “I hope you will fully realize your highest expectations of financial success. The oil bubble here has busted. I may wear my long face.”⁶⁵ Roberts claims that while in Washington, Evans used most of his time to gather support from “patronage mongers,” which included influential Congressmen and in particular, Matthew Simpson, “the great promoter of Methodist appointments, to oust the federal officers in Colorado, who had not supported statehood and to neutralize the influence of Allan A. Bradford, the new delegate to Congress.”⁶⁶

On August 4, 1865, Simpson informed Evans that Harlan, “had an inter-

⁶² Reply of Governor Evans of the Territory of Colorado to that part referring to him, of the report “The Committee on The Conduct of the War” headed “Massacre of Cheyenne Indians.” Executive Department and Superintendency of Indian Affairs, C.T. Denver, Aug. 6, 1865, 7.

⁶³ Reply of Governor Evans, 6.

⁶⁴ Roberts, 446.

⁶⁵ Evans Mss. Collection, History Colorado, Letter, June 28, 1865.

⁶⁶ Roberts. 470.

view with W. Seward, who said to him that personally he was satisfied with you, but that in view of the published action of the Committee he cannot continue the appointment in the face of that report without having trouble in Congress with the Committee.”⁶⁷ Eight days later, James Harlan, Secretary of the Interior, penned the following letter to John Evans:

Honorable John Evans, My Dear Sir, I have received yours of the 31st. The Secretary of State said to me that he was satisfied with you as Governor of Colorado, but that on account of the report of the Committee on the conduct of the war, he thought it would be best for you as a friend of the administration to quietly resign. Mr. Seward will recommend the appointment of a personal friend of yours as your successor.

Yours Truly, Jas Harlan.⁶⁸

What is sad about the ouster is that Bishop Matthew Simpson expended a good deal of time and energy in enabling his close friend John Evans to save face, but as far as we know asked no questions about Sand Creek, and never mentioned the event throughout the rest of his public life, much less express any remorse.

Simpson wrote his wife: “On Friday night I went to Washington, but the Prest was sick & I did not see him . . . I stayed to see Seward. He will not continue Evans—but will continue Elbert as Secretary. He will appoint Cummings as Governor . . . [I] hope not to have such unpleasant work very soon again, as this Territorial business.”⁶⁹ Simpson was relieved that the affair was over, or so he thought.

VI

Raymond G. Carey argued that Chivington in no sense was the lone initiator of the Sand Creek treachery. His immediate superior, Major S. R. Curtis, Commander of the Department of Kansas communicated with both Chivington and Wynkoop that he would not “permit or allow treaty with the Indians without his approval.”⁷⁰ Chivington’s soldiers were civilian recruits, 100 day volunteers, exasperated by the harassment of Native Americans, motives justified or unjustified, they saw the conflict solely from their vantage point, a threat that needed to be extinguished. Carey captured the prevailing mood in that,

Fear and insecurity are seldom the parents of temperate judgment, and Denver citizens, who had been thrown into a state of mass hysteria earlier in the summer, were not inclined to be temperate and reasonable, and to recognize that the simple enlistment of a regiment would not work immediate miracles.⁷¹

Chivington’s inaction with his volunteers incited the Colorado citizenry to refer to his regiment as the “bloodless third.” Janet LeCompte describes

⁶⁷ Evans Mss. Collection, History Colorado, Letter, August 4, 1864.

⁶⁸ Evans Mss. Collection, History Colorado, Letter, August 12, 1865.

⁶⁹ UMA, Drew University, Simpson papers, Letter, August 4, 1865.

⁷⁰ Raymond G. Carey, “Another View of the Sand Creek Affair,” *The Denver Monthly Roundup* 16 (February, 1960): 7.

⁷¹ Carey, 8.

Chivington's predicament:

For nearly three years afterward (Glorieta), Colonel Chivington and his First Regiment sat out the war at Camp Weld near Denver, suffering from boredom, scurvy, damp barracks and delayed mail. Denied a place in the great armies, the soldiers fretted and fumed and in the spring of 1864 some of them hung their officers in effigy. The citizens of Colorado were equally discouraged. Business was dull, immigration slow. In the East the war was about to end (or so everyone thought) and still Colorado's people were not a part of the war's excitement and sacrifice. By April of 1864, soldiers and citizens alike were itching for a fight.⁷²

VII

Simpson's death in 1884 devastated Evans probably as much as the loss of his four children and first wife. When Evans, who was in New York, was requested to be a pallbearer for the Simpson funeral he responded, "I am overwhelmed with grief. My heart is bowed down under a sense of my own great bereavement in the death of Bishop Simpson. Yes, in the loss of my spiritual father. My most steadfast and intimate friend. My most trusted advisor and wisest counselor for over forty years. I am sorely grieved."⁷³

Simpson counted John Evans as one of his closest friends, certainly his most trusted financial advisor. On two separate trips to Colorado, Simpson requested to visit the mines in which Evans had invested on behalf of the Bishop.⁷⁴ When Evans sought a financial recommendation, Simpson provided the character reference:

It gives me pleasure to say that I have been acquainted with honorable John Evans, ex-governor, Colorado, for some thirty years. Our friendship during that time has been uninterrupted. . . . I believe him to be a gentleman of high moral integrity, having been an active member of the Methodist Church, having been a delegate in our last general conference, and he is a delegate-elect to the ensuing one.

Like most ecclesiastics of his day, or any other, Simpson gaped at Evans' financial acuity, "He has acquired a handsome property, has been president of a Railroad Company. Thus, a reputation far more than ordinary financial skill. I would put the most implicit confidence in any statement he might make, in being his honest understanding and judgment in such cases."⁷⁵

Simpson's admiration was not without its direct financial benefits. Evidently, for Christmas 1880, Evans sent the Simpsons a sizable monetary gift to which Simpson responded, "I regret the delay to acknowledge your great kindness. I rejoice that God has given you, both the means with heart to delight in acts of kindness to your friends. But Mrs. S. as well as myself, were greatly surprised at so unexpectedly and so generous a present."⁷⁶

VIII

⁷² Janet LeCompte, "Sand Creek," *The Colorado Magazine* 16 (November 4, 1964): 316.

⁷³ Evans Mss. Collection, History Colorado, Letter, June 18, 1884.

⁷⁴ Evans Mss. Collection, History Colorado, Letters, May 25, 1871; May 14, 1881.

⁷⁵ Evans Mss. Collection, History Colorado, Letter, October 8, 1874.

⁷⁶ Evans Mss. Collection, History Colorado, Letter, January 18, 1881.

In 1863, the Colorado Conference was formed, and in 1864, Chivington, in spite of his lack of involvement in church matters, was placed on the Auditing Committee and the Committee on Missions. Evans also served on the Auditing Committee, but how much face to face contact they had is difficult to say.⁷⁷ In 1867, John Chivington was welcomed back into the Nebraska Annual Conference, but was not given an appointment. In 1868, he was made an agent of the Nebraska Conference Church Extension Society, but it is unclear as to whether this was a volunteer or paid position. But by 1869, Chivington's Sand Creek baggage along with other shenanigans, had caught up with him. No doubt, the events surrounding Chivington had been prime topics of conversation in the 1868 General Conference. Chivington was not present for roll call at either the 1869 or 1870 Nebraska Annual Conferences. The Friday, April 2, 1869, minutes recorded, "The case of J. M. Chivington with the papers therewith, was referred to the Presiding Elder of the Nebraska City District for investigation according to the discipline."⁷⁸ The remainder of the minutes gives no evidence that any action was taken in regard to Chivington's relationship to the Methodist Episcopal Church. When the Conference was closed, Chivington was still listed as an Elder. The 1870 Nebraska Annual Conference published minutes reported that, "J. M. Chivington's case was reported by the P.E. His character passed, and he located at his own request."⁷⁹

The 1870 written minutes included the tantalizing following statement, which got edited out of the published minutes, "The documents in the case of J. M. Chivington were received and placed on file." However much the historian would want to study these documents, they have never been located.⁸⁰ Again the Conference ended with John Chivington listed as an Elder, i.e., in good standing with the Methodist Episcopal Church. There is no evidence that the Methodist Episcopal Church ever stripped its increasingly notorious minister of his ecclesiastical credentials, other than recording his as "located." Chivington, Evans, and Simpson were bound together by a pervasive ethos of white imperialism, ambition, and less than honorable motives. As Simpson made his Colorado mine trips in the 1870s, he probably did not reflect on what part he had played to prevent non-molestation of Native Americans.

⁷⁷ *Minutes of the Colorado Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, Second Session, held at Central, Colorado, October 20, 1864. These minutes were not published, and are on file: Colorado Annual Conference United Methodist Archives, Iliff School of Theology, Denver, Colorado.

⁷⁸ *Minutes of the Nebraska Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, Ninth Session (Nebraska City: Price-Miller and Company, 1869), 8.

⁷⁹ *Minutes of the Nebraska Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, Tenth Session held at Fremont, March 31-April 2, 1870 (Omaha: Republican Steam Printing House and Book Bindery, 1870), 4.

⁸⁰ Karrie Dvorak, Archivist for the Nebraska Conference of the United Methodist Church in an e-mail to the author, April 23, 2014, convincingly argues that the record of the specific charges against Chivington will never be recovered.

IX

With friends in high places, and discretionary monies from his “war speech,” Simpson during the Civil War began increasingly to search for investment opportunities. His financial ventures included mines in Colorado, a farm in Iowa, oil wells in Pennsylvania, and The White Lands Company, a corporation which was formed with his brother-in-law, George McCullough. Shortly after Evans arrived in Colorado, Simpson inquired of him about the advisability of acquiring lands for orchards. Evans responded, “There are but few places to be had by settling that are watered and they are preparing to irrigate large tracts of places that will be the best when well watered.”⁸¹ In the mid-nineteenth century, there was nothing more important for making profitable financial investments than to be able to ascertain the when and where of railroads. The triumvirate of Evans, Harlan, and Simpson was acutely aware of this economic-geopolitical principle, and on December 17, 1858, Senator Harlan wrote Simpson, “You request me to inform you how things are shaping for the future . . . [T]he majority in Congress will not permit the revenue laws to be change. Hence, no effective specific R.R. Bill can pass.”⁸²

Eventually, Simpson’s capitalistic pursuits would bring him into conflict with the best interests of the Cherokees, not in Colorado, but in southeastern Kansas. Sometime in 1866, James Harlan, Secretary of the Interior, Simpson’s highest and most formidable patronage placement, tipped Simpson regarding a financial opportunity in the American Emigrant Company. Simpson invested \$3,000 in a cartel whose sole purpose was to purchase Native American lands, and realize a quick profit by securing a railroad right-of-way through what is today, Cherokee County, Kansas. The American Emigrant Company was referred to as a “powerful combination of land grabbers, devising ways and means whereby they might purchase the lands . . . in a body at one-tenth their real value.”⁸³

By the authority of a treaty signed with the Cherokees on July 19, 1866, regarding “neutral lands,” lands owned but not occupied by Cherokees, Harlan sold for one dollar per acre, 800,000 acres to the American Emigrant Company. What made the sale particularly suspect was first, though incorporated in Connecticut, the American Emigrant Company was headquartered in Des Moines, Iowa, and three of the nine members were from Mount Pleasant, Iowa, where the Secretary of the Interior had served as President of Iowa Wesleyan University. Second, according to some, Harlan had finalized the transaction August 30, 1866, on the night before he left office, a clandestine affair, which earned Harlan accusations of scandal and eventually cost him his Senate seat in 1872. The Secretary of the Interior was accused of having “his clerks up at night, and he was finishing up business at a furious

⁸¹ LOC. Simpson papers, Letter, December 22, 1862, Container Seven.

⁸² LOC, Simpson papers, Letter, December 17, 1858. Container Seven.

⁸³ Morris Wardell, *A Political History of the Cherokee Nation: 1838-1907* (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1938), 214.

rate. After midnight, Mr. Harlan signed the Neutral Land contract, dating it two days back, and sent it out for record in the department.”⁸⁴

The newspapers poured out their full fury on this betrayal of the Native Americans and the inflated prices, which settlers would pay for the land. The editor of the *Daily Times* in Leavenworth wrote, “I cannot look upon this extraordinary affair in any other light than a most cold-blooded swindle, and a most flagrant violation of the obvious intention and spirit of a sacred trust.”⁸⁵ Harlan was called a “pious swindler, and the Indian office was described as the seat of an enormous corruption, the fruitful source of Indian wars, the scandal of the government.”⁸⁶ Josiah Grinnell, Iowa Congressman, who held a one-tenth interest in the American Emigrant Company was called a “blustering, beefy, corrupt, pharisaical foo-foo; he is as much out of place in Congress as a bull in a china shop.”⁸⁷ Kansas Senator, Samuel Pomeroy, though only marginally involved in the transaction, was referred to as “Blow gun and Blatherskite” and his pompous manner earned him a caricature in Mark Twain’s, *The Gilded Age*.⁸⁸ Contemporary newspaper editor, Eugene Ware, summed up the matter, “Pomeroy and Harlan enjoyed, in the newspapers at that time, a similar notoriety. Both of them were intentionally devout. Both of them worked under *ministerial* (italics mine) influence to the fullest extent, and both of them were charged with bribe taking and bribe giving, and both of them went out of office under the same kind of cloud.”⁸⁹

When Orville Browning succeeded Harlan as Secretary of the Interior, he voided the deal with the American Emigrant Company and gave the contract to James Joy, a railroad investor from Minnesota at the same price and almost identical terms. Simpson held on to his shares until Joy began to sell the land at anywhere from \$2.50 to \$5.00 per acre. In the summer of 1868, the Bishop approached both Harlan and Grinnell, requesting his principal and any interest he may have earned. On July 17, Harlan informed Simpson that Grinnell was, “prepared to return to you your money and interest and \$3,000 and he probably will claim better than you could. I could do it, if I had not been mixed up with the sale.”⁹⁰ Three days later, Grinnell wrote Simpson that he had his money back, \$2,500 with interest, “I also have a contract either for cash in hand or note for one year which will make you show after profits by transfer between \$3,000 and \$4,000 less certain ex-

⁸⁴ Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society, 1897-1900; Together With Addresses At Annual Meetings, Memorials, And Miscellaneous Papers, Also, A Catalog Of Kansas Constitutions, And Territorial and State Documents In The Historical Society, Edited by George. W. Martin, Secretary, Vol. VI, Topeka: Kansas Historical Society, 154.

⁸⁵ “The Cherokee Treaty,” *The Daily Times* (Leavenworth, Kansas, October 17, 1866), 3. On file, Kansas Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas, under “Cherokee Neutral Lands.”

⁸⁶ Paul Wallace Gates, *Fifty Million Acres: Conflicts Over Kansas Land Policy 1854-1890* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1954), 156.

⁸⁷ Gates, 166.

⁸⁸ Craig Miner, “Border Frontier: The Missouri River, Fort Scott & Gulf Railroad in the Cherokee Neutral Lands, 1868-1870,” *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 35.2 (Summer, 1969): 106.

⁸⁹ Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society: 1897-1900, 154.

⁹⁰ LOC, Simpson papers, Letter, July 17, 1868, Container eight.

penses which will bring you not over \$5,000 for which I have a promise by Mr. Joy of a 'ground floor' interest in his R.R. and Sand scheme which promises, I think, 200 percent."⁹¹ In other words, if Simpson would allow his money to be used one more year, he would double his investment. (We do not know whether Simpson invested \$2,500 or \$3,000. My perception is that Grinnell should have said 100% rather than 200%, which in our understanding would be doubling Simpson's money.) It would be a tidy profit. Harlan specifically wrote Simpson concerning Cherokee County, "They will build a railroad through it, making it worth \$5.00 per acre. This would give you a fine profit."⁹²

X

Chivington left Colorado for twenty years (Nebraska, California, Ohio, Canada, and wherever) with controversy following him almost everywhere he went. The years immediately following Sand Creek were particularly devastating for Chivington, events both beyond his control and of his own choosing. In 1866 his son, Thomas, drowned; in 1867 his two year old granddaughter, Lulu, drowned after falling off a Missouri steamboat, which resulted in a frantic but futile effort by her grandfather to save her; the same year his wife, Martha, died while attending a Methodist camp meeting. Then, in the impetuosity of neurotic and erotic greed, in order to take advantage of his daughter-in-law's inheritance, he married the twenty-eight-year-old widow, twenty years younger than himself. The most amazing part of this event is that Bishop Edward Ames performed the ceremony. In April of 1892, Sarah Chivington swore in an affidavit, "May 13th 1868 I was Married to J. M. Chivington by Bishop Ames of the M.E. Church in Chicago. Sarah Chivington."⁹³

Chivington returned to Colorado in 1884, to live out the rest of his years as a respected citizen by the majority of Coloradans and even most Methodists. The older he grew and the whiter his beard, the more dignified he appeared. On June 30, 1884, the *Daily News* reported on Chivington's speaking on the previous Sunday in two different Methodist Churches, "The Hero of Sand Creek Gives His Views on the Theory and Practice of the Christian Religion." Chivington proclaimed, "When Jesus gave that one grand rule 'whatever you would that men should do unto you, do you even so unto them,' he gave them the perfection of moral action. Again, we have the sublime theory in the Scripture of the Common Brotherhood of Our Race. We have the statement that God is no respecter of persons, but that in every nation they that fear God are accepted of him."⁹⁴ Chivington's betrayal of the centrality of the Gospel did not bother the Methodists, or the Baptists,

⁹¹ UMA of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church, Simpson papers, St. George's United Methodist Church, Philadelphia, PA, Letter, July 20, 1868.

⁹² LOC, Simpson papers, Letter, July 17, 1868, Container eight.

⁹³ Cox-Paul., 137.

⁹⁴ *The Daily News* (Denver: June 30, 1884): 8-9.

or the Presbyterians, for that matter. As they viewed it, “the brotherhood of mankind” did not include Native Americans. Cancer claimed Chivington on October 4, 1894, and 600 Masons walked through the streets of Denver in honor of their deceased hero.

As for Evans, he never left Colorado except for brief trips back East. Even though he never obtained his coveted Senate seat, he grew even richer by connecting Denver to the Trans-Continental Railroad. Before he died, his fortune had almost been wiped out by over-extension and the 1890s depression. No man was more revered in Colorado than John Evans, who even had a mountain named for him. He died on July 13, 1897. His body lay in state in the Colorado capitol, with most businesses closing out of respect for his life and death.⁹⁵

When the United Methodist General Conference met in Denver, Colorado, in 1996, the Assembly passed a resolution “That this body of the 1996 General Conference extends to all Cheyenne and Arapahos a hand of reconciliation and asks forgiveness of over 200 persons, mostly women and children, who died in this state where this Great Conference is being held.” The Conference laid the blame at Chivington’s feet, as one who had “held various pastoral appointments including a District Superintendency.” Obviously, the “Resolution” did not trace complicity to John Evans, much less Matthew Simpson.⁹⁶

In the winter of 2013, the administration of Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, requested eight scholars to investigate Sand Creek, and more specifically, to identify John Evans’ responsibility in the affair. In attempting to answer the question, “Did Northwestern indirectly or directly benefit from their founder’s relationship to Sand Creek?” the thorough 110 page report, came to six conclusions, which I summarize: 1. Evans had no prior knowledge and did not plan the massacre. 2. His flawed policy contributed to the massacre. 3. He never confessed any culpability and therefore exhibited deep “moral failure.” 4. Rather than Evans profiting from Sand Creek, the incident hurt him both economically and politically. 5. Though the University would not be able to quantify contributions that had accrued to them through policies destructive to Native Americans, the University had economically benefited. 6. The University has ignored its moral failures and they should be corrected.

What the investigation demonstrated for the purposes of our inquiry is that Simpson and Evans, especially in their relationship to Northwestern University, entered into a collusion of silence:

No evidence suggests that, when Evans came under fire in Washington as a result of the Sand Creek Massacre and had to resign the governorship, the matter ever came up among the Board members meeting in Evanston. If it did arise in their private conversations, few of his colleagues could have conceived of expressing doubts about his conduct or of asking him to step down. This was not only because of their

⁹⁵ Kelsey, 226-229.

⁹⁶ “Sand Creek Apology,” *The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1996), 396-397.

long-standing friendship with him and appreciation of his service and generosity but also because they probably believed, as he did, that he had done nothing wrong. For proof, they could point not only to his self-defense but also to the strong support he received from many leading politicians and most importantly, from the individual they held in the highest esteem, Bishop Matthew Simpson.⁹⁷

On June 20, 1865, a newly-elected Bishop, Calvin Kingsley, wrote Simpson from Denver: "The removal of Governor Evans at this time will be a most unfortunate, if not disastrous affair in this territory. We are just getting a good start in Denver and other important points in the territory, and the Col. and Gov. Evans have been pillars in the church. The persecution of Col. Chivington will probably drive him from the territory, and if the Gov., too, should be removed, it would be a sad day for us."⁹⁸ Whatever the guilt of John Chivington, he incarnated the prevailing white mentality of 1864 Coloradans. The final conquest of the 1803 Louisiana Purchase was the elimination of its original inhabitants. In July of 1865, an investigating committee of Senators James Doolittle, F. S. Foster, and Congressman Lewis Ross, traveled to Denver. On July 21, they held an open forum in the Denver Theatre. Doolittle asked whether the Indians should be placed on reservations or exterminated, "[T]here suddenly arose such a shout, as is never heard unless upon some battlefield—a shout loud enough to raise the roof of the opera house: 'Exterminate them! Exterminate them!'"⁹⁹

Sand Creek was not an anomaly; it was a tragic representation of might makes right, and God favors larger battalions. It was the clash of civilizations that almost always includes greed and selfishness. Exploitation is one of the most consistent themes within the history of humanity. Gary Roberts concludes that, "The Indians were encircled and the lusty exploitative combination of American settlers and American industry could not be held back for long. The dream of men like John Evans, was careening pell-mell into reality, and no group of 'savages' could stand in the way of progress."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ *John Evans Study Committee*, 95.

⁹⁸ LOC, Simpson papers, Letter, June 20, 1865, Container 8.

⁹⁹ Roberts, 515.

¹⁰⁰ Roberts, 573.