

Why I call them the Cleveland ball club

By [Melissa Earley](#)

November 1, 2016

I don't call the ball club from Cleveland by their name. Seeing close-ups of their players makes me cringe. It's not superstition or anxiety about the game. Every time I hear their team name and see their cartoon mascot I think of the Sand Creek Massacre.

I visited the site of the November 29, 1864, Sand Creek Massacre this summer when I was in Colorado. I took an interstate to a highway to a narrow road to a dirt road to get to this sacred site that is a long way from everywhere. I couldn't even see the Rocky Mountains from this sun-baked patch of southeastern Colorado. I squinted even though I was wearing sunglasses. Sagebrush and cottonwood trees marked the landscape. The Sand Creek riverbed was dry. The rangers warned of rattle snakes.

John Evans, [a Methodist who was among the founders of Northwestern University](#), was the Colorado Territory Governor in 1864. He exploited the growing tensions between white settlers and Native Americans for his own political and business gains. His speeches added to the fear-filled air, even issuing a proclamation in August 1864 for citizens to "kill and destroy ... hostile Indians."

John Chivington was the commander of the Third Regiment of the U.S. army. He had been a popular Methodist Episcopal preacher. His regiment wasn't seeing any action and Chivington was eager for advancement.

Evans and Chivington invited "friendly Indians of the plains" to go to designated places of safety. One of the negotiated places of safety was Sand Creek. By mid-October there were 700 people living at Sand Creek, mostly Cheyenne and some Arapahoe.

When the sun rose on November 29 the village at Sand Creek started to stir. Children and grandparents, young men, old women, mothers, fathers, tended to chores. They heard the beating of hooves and called out, "The buffalo are coming." But the thunder wasn't from buffalo. It was from hundreds of U.S. soldiers. Peace Chief Black Kettle raised the white flag and the U.S. flag. And still the soldiers came.

Cheyenne and Arapahoe chiefs walked toward the soldiers to ask for a parley. The U.S. soldiers fired and all the chiefs except Black Kettle were killed.

On top of horses, the U.S. soldiers chased the fleeing Cheyenne and Arapahoe. Some, mostly women, children and the elderly, dug sand pits in the river bed. Chivington ordered the U.S. soldiers to fire the howitzers. The soldiers executed those who surrendered. They gunned down those who fled. The firing stopped when the U.S. troops ran out of bullets. Between 165 and 200 Cheyenne were killed, two-thirds of them were women, children, and the elderly. Another 200 were wounded or maimed.

The following day U.S. soldiers ransacked and burned the village. They took trophies from the fallen bodies—scalps, fingers, genitals.

Some time later, the Congressional Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War found that Chivington had “surprised and murdered in cold blood ... unsuspecting men, women, and children ... who had every reason to believe that they were under [U.S.] protection.” No one was every indicted or tried in military or civilian court. Chivington remained an ordained person in the Methodist Episcopal Church.

I'll watch the World Series tonight. I'll cheer on the Cubs. I'll admire good plays by their opponent. And I'll remember Sand Creek.

*Originally posted at [Waking Up Earley](#)*