United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A) Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-9000a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historic name</th>
<th>Battle of Punished Woman's Fork</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other name/site number</td>
<td>Battle of Squaw's Den/14SC306/Cheyenne Breakout Site/ Battle of Famished Woman's Fork</td>
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2. Location

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Street &amp; number</th>
<th>[REDACTED]</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City or town</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>KS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>103</td>
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<td>County</td>
<td>Scott</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Zip code</td>
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3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title: Kansas State Historical Society
Date: ____________________________

State or Federal agency and bureau:

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional Comments.)

Signature of commenting official /Title: ____________________________
Date: ____________________________

State or Federal agency and bureau:

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet. determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet. determined not eligible for the National Register. removed from the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper: ____________________________
Date of Action: ____________________________

other, (explain: ____________________________
### Battle of Punished Woman's Fork

**Name of Property**: Scott County, Kansas

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<th>5. Classification</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ownership of Property</strong></td>
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<td>[ ] public-Federal</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register</strong></td>
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**Narrative Description**
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)
Battle of Punished Woman's Fork

Scott County, Kansas

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register)

☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history

☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☐ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ D Property has yielded, or likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Military

Period of Significance
1878

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ B removed from its original location.

☐ C a birthplace or grave.

☐ D a cemetery.

☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ F a commemorative property.

☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Significant Dates
1878

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

☐ previously listed in the National Register

☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register

☐ designated a National Historic Landmark

☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering

Record # ______

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office

☐ Other State agency

☐ Federal agency

☐ Local government

☐ University

☐ Other

Name of repository:
Battle of Punished Woman's Fork

Name of Property

Scott County, Kansas

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 30

UTM References [REDACTED]

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

[REDACTED]

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Albert G. Maddux (deceased), Robert F. Metzker, and Jerry Snyder (Edited by KSHS Staff)

Organization Scott County Historical Society

Date April 16, 2007

Street & number 902 West Highway 96

Telephone (620) 872-5153

City or town Scott City

State Kansas

Zip code 67871

Additional Documentation
Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps
A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs
Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items
(Choose with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

Name On file with SHPO.

Street & number

Telephone

City or town

State

Zip code

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.
The Battle of Punished Woman’s Fork (14SC306) is a site that was the location of a confrontation between the U.S. Army and a group of Northern Cheyenne on September 27, 1878. The Northern Cheyenne, under the joint leadership of chiefs Dull Knife and Little Wolf, had left the Darlington Agency in Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma) earlier in September of that year and were attempting to return to their homes in Montana. A detachment of U.S. Army soldiers under the command of Colonel William H. Lewis from Fort Dodge, who had orders to capture and return them to Oklahoma, was in close pursuit. The Cheyenne stopped in the Ladder Creek valley, an area with which they were familiar from past hunting trips. They chose a narrow tributary, known today [REDACTED], where they prepared an ambush for the approaching soldiers by digging rifle pits above prominent ledges and concealing their horses. Colonel Lewis was able to ascertain the Indians’ intentions and avoided entering the canyon, choosing instead to deploy his troops in the uplands west of Ladder Creek. The troops advanced northward across a series of ridges toward the positions occupied by the Cheyenne. After a protracted gun battle, during which both sides suffered casualties (including Colonel Lewis), the Cheyenne were able to slip away and continue their flight to the north. The core of the battle site was located [REDACTED]at a point where rock ledges and overhangs provided concealment for an ambush, along with some measure of protection. The confrontation at [REDACTED] was part of a much larger event, often referred to as the Northern Cheyenne Exodus (and sometimes as the Dull Knife Raid), and had implications far beyond the Ladder Creek valley. The site is in northern Scott County [REDACTED] north of Scott City (Figure 1). [REDACTED] (Figure 2). A stone monument marks the site, with a plaque describing the battle. At the time of the engagement, the surrounding valley slopes and uplands were all covered with prairie grasses. The floor of Ladder Creek valley and some of the adjacent upland area has been cultivated in the years since, and a regular network of section-line gravel roads along with a few farmsteads, a church camp, and development associated with [REDACTED] situated nearby. Nevertheless, the immediate vicinity of the battle site remains in native grasses and has been maintained in that state by means of regular grazing. Its rugged topography and relatively remote location has served to preserve its key features (Figure 3). Those include the rock ledges above which the Cheyenne dug their rifle pits, a portion of the rock overhang (known locally as Squaw’s Den) beneath which the women and children took refuge during the battle, the Ladder Creek valley, the narrow floor of [REDACTED], and the nearby uplands to the south across which the troops approached. From the vantage point of the rock ledges in Battle Canyon, the site maintains much of the setting that it must have had when the Cheyenne had prepared their ambush and were awaiting the approach of Colonel Lewis and his command. The nominated area (30 acres) is larger than that of archeological site 14SC306, which records only the rock overhang under which the Cheyenne women and children took refuge during the battle. The 30-acre area being nominated corresponds to the property that has been owned [REDACTED]. Nearby areas where relevant activities took place, most notably the uplands to the south from which the soldiers approached and established skirmish lines, is not being nominated at this time. Nevertheless, the 30-acre parcel
preserves the core of the battle site within which the most important features are located and where the most significant events took place. These include the overhang beneath which the Cheyenne women and children were sheltered, the rock ledges and high points upon which most rifle pits were placed, the draw in which the horses were concealed, and the ridge upon which Colonel Lewis was fatally wounded.
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

The Battle of Punished Woman’s Fork is significant under Criterion A for its association with the Northern Cheyenne Exodus. It took place during 1878 and 1879 and is one of the best-known events of the Plains Indian Wars of the 1860s and 1870s. The clash which took place at the site between the Cheyenne and the U.S. Army, and their ultimate escape to continue their journey north toward Montana was a pivotal event during the larger Northern Cheyenne Exodus (Figure 4). That event had national significance, in that it ultimately brought about significant changes in policy toward Native Americans. Prior to that time, a series of military clashes had taken place between the Plains tribes (the Cheyenne among them) and the U.S. Army. In particular, the Cheyenne were allied with the Sioux in a number of battles on the Northern Plains, the best known being the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876. Both the army and the tribes suffered casualties in these clashes, as did Euro-American civilians caught up in Indian raids. In this context the federal government, backed by public opinion, favored dealing harshly with the tribes, and removing them to reservations in Indian Territory whether they wished to go there or not. After the Northern Cheyenne Exodus though, when a small number of Cheyenne reached their home territory in Montana after an arduous flight from present-day Oklahoma, the government and the public at large came to view the Indians’ situation more favorably. This change in attitude is particularly remarkable given widespread outrage among settlers and herders at the raids and killings perpetrated by the Indians during their northward trek. The Northern Cheyenne Reservation was later established at least in part as a result of the Indians’ flight from Indian Territory to their home territory in Montana. The National Park Service views the Northern Cheyenne Exodus Trail as being of National Significance for several reasons (NPS 2002:59-60). These include the forced relocation of tribal peoples to Indian Territory in retribution for clashes with the army, and the outrage of the Cheyenne at the culture clashes which had taken place over the previous two decades. It is also seen as a seminal event in Cheyenne history and culture, remembered in detail to this day. Since the Battle of Punished Woman’s Fork is one of the best-preserved sites where confrontations took place along the route of the Northern Cheyenne Exodus, it is clearly of national significance. The National Park Service views it as the most significant engagement (and a potential National Historic Landmark) along the route taken by the Cheyenne, in particular because of the carefully orchestrated military tactics employed by the warriors, which represented an important departure from earlier engagements on the Plains (NPS 2002:64).

The site today retains much of its setting as it would have appeared in 1878 (Figures 5 – 9). Its core, [REDACTED], consists of a narrow ravine that flows from northwest to [REDACTED]. It is sharply constrained at its upper end by a series of rock ledges and a well-defined overhang that has partially collapsed (Figure 6 - 7). The ravine is very rugged and is covered with native prairie grasses, with no indication that the area has ever been cultivated. Several features identified as rifle pits excavated by
the Cheyenne are present above the rock ledges, lending further confirmation to the belief that the area has never seen cultivation (Figures 8 - 9). Most archeological sites are nominated under Criterion D for their potential to yield additional significant information, but that is not the case here. Artifact collecting is known to have taken place, both by collectors with metal detectors and by local historians seeking to understand combatant movements during the battle. These activities have compromised any remaining archeological evidence. Since no systematic archeological investigations have ever been carried out, the magnitude of disturbance and the potential for intact cultural deposits cannot be evaluated. Recent activities though, suggest that the level of disturbance (especially in the core area near the monument) could be high. In 1959, 1960, and 1961, local residents staged historical pageants at the battle site. People dressed as soldiers and Cheyenne warriors re-enacted the battle before large audiences. Some of the rifle pits are represented by slight circular depressions, and may well be unaltered (Figure 8). Others though, seem too well defined given the passage of nearly 130 years, and may well have been enhanced for the benefit of pageant audiences (Figure 9).

The Scott County Historical Society has maintained a long-term interest in the preservation of the site. The late Albert Maddux, along with other members, has researched and written about the battle and its place in the larger context of the Plains Indian Wars. The property was privately owned and used as part of ranching operations by several owners in the decades following the battle. In 1960 the owner, [REDACTED], deeded the 30 acres encompassing the core of the battle site to [REDACTED]. Grazing over the years has maintained the prairie grass cover with minimal encroachment by woody species. [REDACTED] The Scott County Historical Society hopes to use National Register listing to enhance the site’s preservation and protection.

Background

A large number of sources dealing with the battle at Punished Woman’s Fork and the larger Northern Cheyenne Exodus are available, including Buecker 1999; Monnett 2001; Moore, et al. 2001; NPS 2002; Powers 1971, 1972, 1984; Sandoz 1953; and Utley 1973. The best known of these sources is probably Mari Sandoz’ book, Cheyenne Autumn, in part because it was made into a movie by the same name in 1964. The following description though, is drawn primarily from an unpublished manuscript that describes the Battle of Punished Woman’s Fork and its aftermath in great detail (Maddux and Maddux n.d.a). A condensed version was later prepared and printed by the Scott County Historical Society (Maddux and Maddux n.d.b).

In the late 1870s, the Plains Indian wars were coming to an end. For more than a decade, clashes had between the U.S. Army and Native American tribes had taken place as settlers moved westward. In the case of the Cheyenne, they had become divided into northern and southern bands, especially after establishment of the Oregon Trail up the Platte Valley in the 1840’s. The Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1851 set territories for the Plains tribes, and recognized the two Cheyenne groups (Moore et al.:865).
Despite many defeats though, the Plains tribes were still a formidable military force. A major turning point came in 1876, when Sioux and Cheyenne warriors at the Battle of the Little Bighorn defeated the 7th Cavalry. In order to exact retribution and to bring a decisive end to all hostilities, the U.S. Army moved onto the Plains in force shortly thereafter. The Cheyenne, who had long fought the army, were defeated in November of 1876 when a village in the Big Horn Mountains of Wyoming under the leadership of Dull Knife came under attack. This site (known as the Morning Star or Dull Knife village) represents the location of a pivotal event, one that precipitated the surrender of the Northern Cheyenne in the spring of 1877 (NPS 2002:64). After their surrender, a total of 937 people were escorted (over their objections) nearly 1000 miles to the Darlington Agency in Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma). There, they joined the Southern Cheyenne whose move to the area had been precipitated by several military engagements, including a major defeat at the Battle of Summit Springs in 1869. Their surrender took place on March 6, 1875 (Moore et al. 2001:865). The Northern Cheyenne spent the winter of 1877–1878 in Indian Territory with their southern relatives under very difficult circumstances. Promised annuities were not delivered, and their numbers were reduced by malnutrition and sickness. Finally, the decision to return to their homes in Montana was made, and on the night of September 9, 1878, a group of 353 people (92 warriors, 120 women, and 141 children) under the joint leadership of Dull Knife and Little Wolf slipped away (Maddux and Maddux n.d:a:36).

As the Cheyenne moved northward into Kansas, they were involved in a series of raids and skirmishes in which several settlers were killed (Figure 4). Though pursued by soldiers from several army detachments, they were able to escape and continue moving northward. On the afternoon of September 25, 1878, the Cheyenne arrived in the Ladder Creek valley, an area with which they were familiar from earlier hunting trips. There they camped for two days. Knowing that the army was in pursuit, they chose a narrow tributary, known today [REDACTED], and set about preparing an ambush for the approaching soldiers by digging rifle pits above prominent ledges and concealing their horses. Much of what is known about specific movements of units during the battle has been learned from a hand-drawn map of the battle prepared by Corporal Sharn of Company B, 4th U.S. Cavalry. His eyewitness account shows topographic features and positions of the combatants (Figure 9). Rifle pits were excavated above the canyon walls, from which warriors would have a clear view of the approaching soldiers, and some of their group (composed mostly of women and children) was sheltered in a small rock overhang.

The pursuing U.S. Army force from Fort Dodge consisted of 220 soldiers and scouts under the command of Lieutenant Colonel William H. Lewis. Colonel Lewis and his command approached the Ladder Creek valley from the south. They entered the valley, crossed the creek to its west side and continued northward. After encountering some difficulties getting wagons through a low muddy area, they approached a side drainage known today [REDACTED]. Through the discovery of a recent campsite and through observing movements of Indians in the valley Lewis was able to ascertain that the Cheyenne were concealed in the narrow draw known [REDACTED]. He may also have been aided by an early shot fired by a young warrior. After securing his wagon train in [REDACTED], he prepared
for the engagement. Rather than moving up through the narrow canyon into the ambush prepared by Little Wolf and Dull Knife, Lewis instead chose to deploy his troops in the uplands west of Ladder Creek. The troops advanced northward across a series of ridges toward the positions occupied by the Cheyenne in [REDACTED] (Figure 9). As the troops moved forward by means of several skirmish lines, the Cheyenne were driven back toward the rock overhang at the head of Battle Canyon and it appeared that the soldiers would prevail. As dusk approached, Lewis was leading his troops in a skirmish line along a ridge overlooking the ravine in which the Cheyenne had concealed their horses when he was struck in the leg by a rifle ball and seriously wounded. Captain Clarence Mauck, who then assumed command, broke off the attack and withdrew his troops to their camp. He apparently believed that the Cheyenne warriors would hold their positions through the night, so that his troops could continue the engagement in the morning. Under cover of darkness though, the Cheyenne slipped away to the north using the bottom of [REDACTED] as their escape route (Figure 7). In order to do so, they were forced to abandon at least 60 of their horses, many loaded with supplies. Captain Mauck and his command gave chase the next day, but the Indians outdistanced them. Lewis later died as he was being transported to Fort Wallace for medical treatment. In addition to Lewis, three other soldiers were killed and several were wounded.

After the Battle of Punished Woman’s Fork, the Cheyenne continued northward and were involved in several raids and skirmishes in which additional settlers were killed (Figure 4). One of these is memorialized with a monument in Oberlin to the “Last Indian Raid in Kansas”. After crossing into southern Nebraska, the Dull Knife and Little Wolf bands separated. Those who chose to stay with Little Wolf spent the winter of 1878 – 1879 in the Sand Hills, and ultimately made their way to Montana, where they surrendered near Fort Keogh on March 25, 1879 (Figure 4). Perhaps the best-known part of the story involves the fate of the Dull Knife band, which was captured on October 25, 1878 and imprisoned at Fort Robinson in Nebraska. After the Cheyenne refused to return to Indian Territory, the fort’s commander confined them to an unheated barracks building in winter and cut off all food and water. On January 9, 1879, the Indians broke out of the barracks and escaped. Soldiers pursued them from the fort, whereupon most were killed. A few survivors (Dull Knife among them) were later captured northwest of Fort Robinson near Hat Creek Bluffs (Figure 4).

In the aftermath of the Northern Cheyenne Exodus, the view of the federal government and that public opinion in general changed. Significant sympathy for the Indians’ position developed, despite lingering anger over the numerous raids that they carried out during their flight. Some of their leaders were tried in court for their actions, but were not convicted. The survivors, Dull Knife and Little Wolf among them, were ultimately allowed to return to their homelands in Montana. The Northern Cheyenne Reservation (which still exists today) was created in 1884, largely as a result of the Dull Knife and Little Wolf bands’ escape from Indian Territory.
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Archeological Investigations

No systematic archeological investigations have ever been carried out at the battle site. Artifact collecting is known to have taken place, both by collectors with metal detectors and by local historians seeking to understand combatant movements during the battle. These activities have compromised any remaining archeological evidence. Since no systematic archeological investigations have ever been carried out, the magnitude of disturbance and potential for intact cultural deposits cannot be evaluated. Nevertheless, the presence of period military artifacts lends confirmation to the contention that this is indeed the location of the battle that took place on September 27, 1878.
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National Park Service

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Figure 1 redacted.
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Figure 2 redacted.
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Figure 3 redacted.
Figure 4. Map of the route taken by the Northern Cheyenne from Indian Territory to Montana, 1878 – 1879 (National Park Service Clash of Cultures Trails Project).
Figure 5. View south up the Ladder Creek Valley with the approach taken by the soldiers in the uplands to the right.
Figure 6. View southeast down Battle Canyon from the position occupied by the Cheyenne warriors on September 27, 1878.
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Scott City vicinity, Scott County, KS

Figure 7.  View northeast at the rock overhang which was used to shelter Cheyenne women and children during the Battle of Punished Woman’s Fork and the canyon floor through which the Indians ultimately made their escape.
Figure 8. View southeast at a feature believed to be an unaltered rifle pit dug by the Cheyenne warriors in preparation for their confrontation with the U.S. Army.
Figure 9. View south at a feature believed to be an enhanced rifle pit dug by the Cheyenne warriors in preparation for their confrontation with the U.S. Army.
Figure 10. Hand-drawn map produced by Corporal Sharn, Company B, 4th U.S. Cavalry showing Battle Canyon and the placement of Cheyenne and U.S. Army forces on September 27, 1878.
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National Park Service

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Figure 11 redacted.
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National Park Service

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Battle of Punished Woman’s Fork
Scott City vicinity, Scott County, KS

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Beucker, Thomas R.

Monnett, John H.

Powers, Ramon S.


Maddux, Albert G., and Vernon R. Maddux


Moore, John H., Margot Liberty, and Terry Straus

National Park Service (NPS)
2002 The Northern Cheyenne Exodus Trail, In The Clash of Cultures Trails Project, A Cooperative Effort by the Western History Association and the National Park Service, pp 56-64.
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Scott City vicinity, Scott County, KS

Sandoz, Mari

Utley, Robert M.
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Scott City vicinity, Scott County, KS

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

[REDACTED]

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

[REDACTED]
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National Park Service

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Scott City vicinity, Scott County, KS

PHOTOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The following information is applicable to all photos:
Location: The Battle of Punished Woman’s Fork, Scott City vic., Scott Co., KS
Photographer: Tim Weston
Date: 10 April 2007
Digital Images archived at the Kansas State Historical Society

Photo 1: View south up the Ladder Creek valley with the approach taken by the soldiers in the uplands to the right

Photo 2: View southeast down [REDACTED] Canyon from the position occupied by the Cheyenne warriors on September 27, 1878.

Photo 3: View northeast at the roach overhang which was used to shelter Cheyenne women and children during the Battle of Punished Woman’s Fork and the canyon floor through which the Indians ultimately made their escape.

Photo 4: View southeast at a feature believed to be an unaltered rifle pit dug by the Cheyenne warriors in preparation for their confrontation with the U.S. Army.

Photo 5: View south at a feature believed to be an enhanced rifle pit dug by the Cheyenne warriors in preparation for their confrontation with the U.S. Army.

Photo 6: View northeast at [REDACTED] Canyon showing the stone monument and the sharp bend in the canyon just below the rock overhang in which some of the Cheyenne took refuge during the battle.

Photo 7: View north from the vicinity where Colonel Lewis was fatally wounded near the end of the battle.

Photo 8: View north at the draw in which the Cheyenne concealed their horses during the battle.

Photo 9: View northwest up [REDACTED] Canyon with the monument visible in the upper right.
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  

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<td>Scott City vicinity, Scott County, KS</td>
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Photo 10: Distant view northwest up [REDACTED] Canyon with the monument visible in the background.

Photo 11: Plaque attached to the stone monument overlooking the site of the Battle of Punished Woman’s Fork.