

A Cheyenne Odyssey Timeline

1600s—The Cheyenne begin a migration southward from present-day Minnesota to the Dakotas. They abandon their fishing economy in exchange for a sedentary lifestyle based on lodge villages and corn-planting.

1750-1790—The Cheyenne acquire horses and, as a result, shift from agricultural-based production to migratory hunting. They also begin to use buffalo hides for the construction of tipis.

1780s—Smallpox is the first European disease to impact Cheyenne and Plains Indians.

1803—In one of the largest land exchanges in history, the United States acquires the Louisiana Territory (the land from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains) from France for \$15 million.

1804—President Jefferson authorizes Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to carry out a surveying expedition of the Louisiana territory. Lewis, Clark, and their “Corps of Discovery” travel over 8,000 miles and record information about native populations, plants, animals, and topography.

1825—The Cheyenne sign a peace treaty with the United States known as the Friendship Treaty that marks the beginning of formal relations between the tribe and the U.S. government.

1830—President Andrew Jackson signs the Indian Removal Act. The controversial act forces the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole tribes to move westward and cede all land claims east of the Mississippi River.

1830s—The establishment of a trading post at Bent’s Fort on the Arkansas River draws some Cheyenne southward, while increased traffic along the Santa Fe Trail and other emigrant routes reduces the buffalo herds and grasslands. In 1832, the Cheyenne split into two tribes, Northern and Southern. The former remains tied to the Platte River in Nebraska, while the latter follows the Arkansas River towards eastern Colorado and western Kansas.

1838—President Jackson’s policy of Indian removal forces the Cherokee Nation to move to an area within present-day Oklahoma. This harsh journey, known as “The Trail of Tears,” takes the lives of 4,000 Cherokee, many of whom die from starvation and disease.

1849-1850s—A cholera epidemic devastates the Cheyenne, especially in the south.

1851—American treaty commissioners meet with leaders from several western American Indian nations, including the Cheyenne, Lakota, Arapaho, and Crow, to sign the first Fort Laramie Treaty. The treaty grants white emigrants safe passage on the Oregon Trail. In exchange, the tribes are given certain territorial rights, as well as an annual payment for the next fifty years. In 1852, the U.S. Senate ratifies the treaty, changing the annuity period from fifty years to ten years, with an additional five years at the discretion of the president. This amendment was approved by the American Indian nations in 1854.

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1857—After a series of skirmishes between white emigrants and the Cheyenne, the U.S. military decides to retaliate with its first major military operation against the Cheyenne, killing approximately thirty Cheyenne warriors.

1858—Hundreds of thousands of miners travel to what is soon to become the Colorado Territory in search of gold. This is Pike's Peak Gold Rush, or the Colorado Gold Rush. In the years after the initial frenzy, Colorado officials seek to open Cheyenne and Arapaho lands in the region to white mining and settlement, and call on the U.S. military to achieve those objectives.

1862—The Homestead Act is passed in May by both houses of Congress and signed by President Lincoln. Its provisions maintain that any U.S. citizen, 21 years or older and head of household, may claim 160 acres of property. The law increases the number white settlers arriving in the West.

1863-68—Searching for a route to connect the Oregon Trail with new areas of gold, miners establish the Bozeman Trail across present-day Wyoming and Montana in 1863. Between 1863 and 1866, some 3,500 settlers cross this wagon pathway. The U.S. military builds forts to protect these settlers, leading to increased conflict with Lakota and Cheyenne buffalo hunters. The conflict becomes known as Red Cloud's War. In 1866, the U.S. military assumes sole use and control of the road.

1864—On November 29, in what is now known as the Sand Creek Massacre, 700 soldiers under the leadership of Colonel John Chivington, raid and destroy a Southern Cheyenne encampment. Ignoring the hoisted flag of surrender, Chivington orders his men to fire directly into the camp (located within the Colorado Territory), killing 150 men, women, and children. Despite American public outrage over the incident, Chivington and other military leaders are never charged with any crimes for their actions. Some Southern Cheyenne resettle with relatives in the north in the wake of the massacre.

1865—A treaty is made with the Southern Cheyenne and Southern Arapaho, authorizing the creation of a reservation across the borders of Kansas and Oklahoma.

1866-67—As part of Red Cloud's War, a series of violent confrontations takes place between the U.S. army and the Lakota and their Cheyenne allies. In December 1866, during the "Battle of the Hundred Slain," American Indians ambush and kill a company of soldiers under the command of Captain Fetterman. In August 1867, Cheyenne warriors attack and derail a Union Pacific train in Plum Creek, Nebraska, alarming officials in Washington who are concerned about interruptions to the transcontinental railroad.

1867- Three treaties, known collectively as the Medicine Lodge Treaty, are signed at Medicine Lodge Creek in Kansas, between the United States and Plains Indian tribes. These treaties are designed to bring about peace by relocating American Indians to reservations away from white settlements. The treaty with the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho reduces their land by more than half, but allows the tribes to continue hunting buffalo north of the Arkansas River as long as the herds remain.

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1868—On May 7, the second Fort Laramie Treaty is signed. American Indians who sign the treaty agree to stop attacking settlers and wagon trains. The U.S. military abandons its claim to the Bozeman Trail.

1869— Some Southern Cheyenne settle with Arapaho at the Darlington Agency in Oklahoma (Indian Territory, near Fort Reno). Completion of transcontinental railroad increases white encroachment.

1874-75— Lieutenant Colonel Custer leads a military expedition in the Black Hills (in present-day South Dakota) and confirms the presence of “gold among the roots of the grass” in the eastern Black Hills. The word spreads, and thousands of white men travel west, with some crossing into the Black Hills, violating the second Fort Laramie Treaty, signed in 1868. President Grant does not prevent or stop them from moving into the Black Hills, knowing that the inevitable Native American attacks will result in war.

1876— Although the second Fort Laramie Treaty granted American Indians the right to occupy lands outside their reservation, the U.S. government orders all tribes to report to and remain on their agencies. Many Lakota and Cheyenne bands refuse to comply with the order. The Battle of the Rosebud (known by the Cheyenne as “The Battle Where the Girl Saved Her Brother”) takes place on June 17. Lakota and Cheyenne forces defeat General George Crook and his troops, who attempted to force them onto the reservation. The Battle of the Little Bighorn, also known as “Custer’s Last Stand,” and as the “Battle of Greasy Grass” by Plains Indians, takes place on June 25. Lakota and Cheyenne warriors defeat the U.S. 7th Cavalry, led by General George Armstrong Custer. Custer and his troops die in the fight. In November, the U.S. army makes a surprise attack on Chief Dull Knife’s camp, destroying their village and food supply.

1877—In the aftermath of the Rosebud and Little Bighorn battles, the Northern Cheyenne are forced to reside with the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho at the Darlington Agency in Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma). Living conditions on the reservation are extremely difficult. There is widespread malaria and a shortage of food.

1878—Led by Chiefs Little Wolf and Dull Knife (also known as Morning Star), almost three hundred Northern Cheyenne escape the reservation and flee north towards Montana. This begins a 1,500 mile trek known as the Northern Cheyenne Exodus. After reaching the Platte River, the group splits in two. Chief Little Wolf leads the first band, which eventually escapes to Fort Keogh (present-day Miles City, Montana). The second band, led by Chief Dull Knife (Morning Star) is surrounded by the U.S. army, and goes to Fort Robinson (in Nebraska) with the hopes of remaining in the north. Instead, Dull Knife’s band is put into prison barracks and told they must return to Oklahoma.

1879—The Fort Robinson Massacre takes place in Nebraska. Chief Dull Knife’s band decides to “break out” of prison, rather than face a forced removal back to the Oklahoma reservation. 64 Northern Cheyenne, including women and young children, are killed by federal soldiers, while others escape to the surrounding hills and hide. Some Cheyenne die from starvation and exposure to the cold. In the wake of the massacre, there is increased public sympathy for the plight of the Northern Cheyenne. Chief Dull Knife and the remaining band members join Little Wolf and his band at Fort

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Keogh in Montana, and are permitted to remain in the north.

1880—Cheyenne families leave Fort Keogh due to overcrowding and settle along the Tongue River.

1884—The Tongue River Reservation for the Northern Cheyenne, located along the Tongue River in current southeastern Montana, is established on November 16 by Executive Order of President Chester A. Arthur.

1900- The boundaries of the Northern Cheyenne Reservation are extended in an Executive Order issued by President William McKinley on March 19.

1924—The Indian Citizenship Act, also known as the Snyder Act, is passed on June 2, and grants American citizenship to all American Indians born in the United States, provided that it doesn't affect their rights to "tribal or other property."

1935— The Northern Cheyenne Constitution, based predominantly, in form and content, on the U.S. Constitution, is approved on November 23 under the auspices of the Indian Reorganization Act.

1963—The Northern Cheyenne receive a \$4,200,000 settlement for land taken from them in violation of the 1851 and 1868 Fort Laramie Treaties.

1975 —Dull Knife Memorial College is established on the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation in Lame Deer, Montana. The institution, now called Chief Dull Knife College, offers courses for associate degrees in arts and applied sciences, and has a library for students and the reservation community.

1978—Congress passes the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA), granting religious freedom to American Indians, including the right to protected access to sacred sites, freedom of conscience, and ownership of sacred religious artifacts and objects.

1990—Congress passes the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act (NAGRPA) on November 16, requiring federal agencies or other organizations receiving federal funding to return any American Indian cultural artifacts and human remains to tribes.

1993— The Northern Cheyenne petition for the human remains of 26 relatives, and receive 19 bodies from the Smithsonian Institution, including seven members of Chief Morning Star's band killed in the Fort Robinson massacre of 1879. The remains are returned to the tribe and buried on the Northern Cheyenne reservation.

2008—The federal government recognizes the Rosebud and Wolf Mountain battle sites as National Historic Landmarks, after being petitioned to do so by the Northern Cheyenne.

Today—The Northern Cheyenne reside on their reservation, which is headquartered in Lame Deer, Montana. The Southern Cheyenne live on federal trust lands, along with the Southern Arapaho. The

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headquarters for the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes is in Concho, Oklahoma.