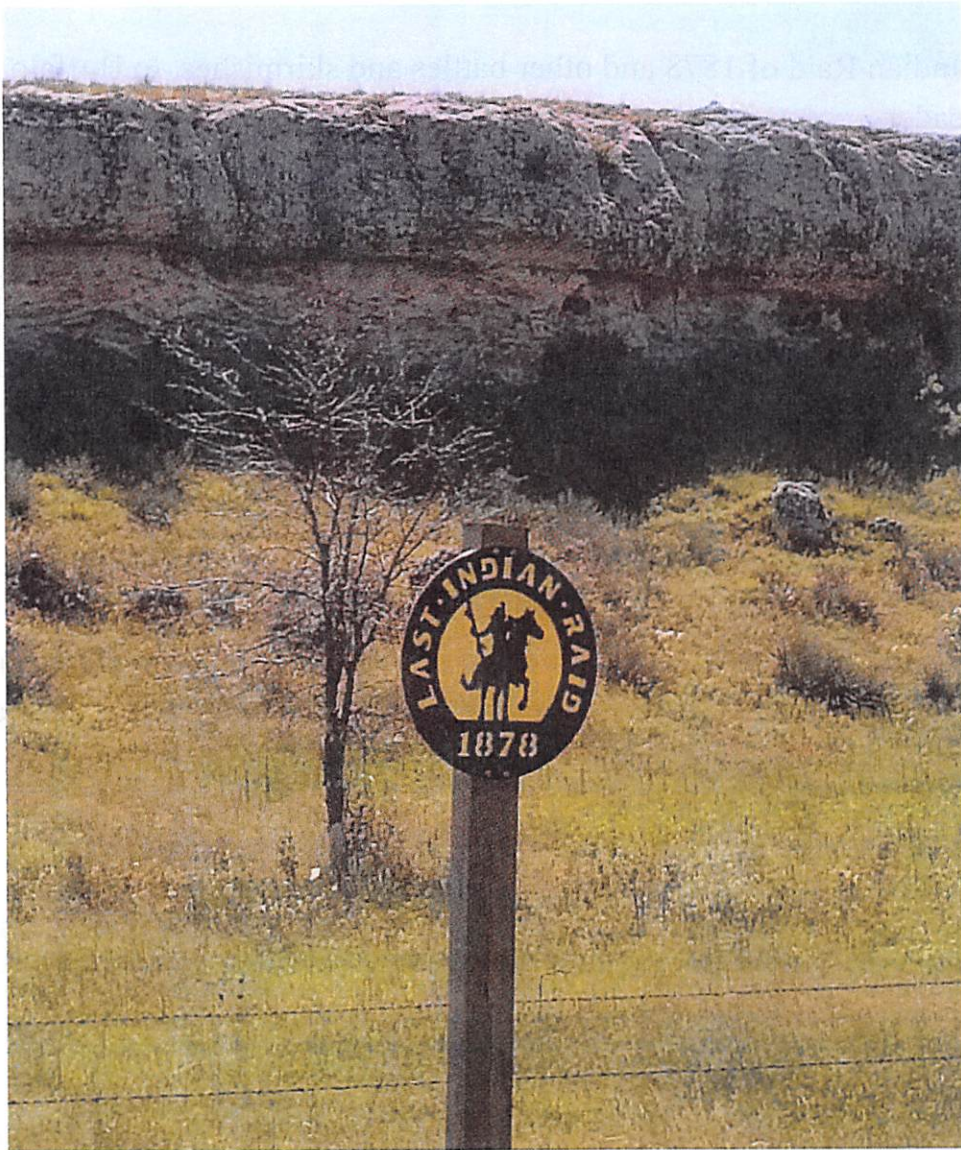


Re-Live the History of the Last Indian Raid in Kansas Through Decatur County 1878



Decatur County Last Indian Raid Museum Transports you back to a Different Time

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From the Indian Raid of 1878 and other battles and skirmishes, to Buffalo Hunters, homesteaders, connections to people like Wild Bill (James Butler) Hickok, the Great Western Cattle Trail, the Museum is dedicated to preserving history.

The museum has fifteen structures with thirteen authentic buildings dating from 1885-1952. Our historic Sod House was built on site in 1958 and the other authentic buildings were relocated to the museum grounds from surrounding locations in Decatur County to create a village setting.

Enjoy a self-guided tour!!

The museum is also the place to find additional information about the Indian Raid. A book has been compiled by the director, Sharleen Wurm with personal accounts of persons that survived the raid, timeline of events and more about each of the victims. The Gift Shop also has several books dealing with the raid such as Mari Sandoz's book of the Indian's side of the raid, Cheyenne Autumn.

We hope you have enjoyed your driving tour and if you have not visited the museum be sure to swing by and let us know how your tour went and/or like us on Facebook and post some pictures of your tour.

All donations are greatly appreciated to keep projects like this going.

Re-Living the History of the Last Indian Raid in Kansas Through Decatur County 1878

As you start your tour here at the Decatur County Last Indian Raid Museum you will be taken back in time via dirt and gravel roads to a time of NO roads only buffalo and cattle trails, Sod Houses, and no form of telecommunications.

Directions are given in GPS readings as to where each marker is located, then county road names (F LN) and odometer readings for driving directions.

This booklet gives just an overview of what happened at each marker, who was killed, and what happened. For more detailed accounts and pictures, you will want to purchase book *"From the Files of the Decatur County Museum: Stories and Remembrances of Pioneer Life and the Encounter with the Northern Cheyennes"*, compiled by Sharleen Wurm, Museum Director.

From the stop light north of the museum turn left to stop sign, another left turn puts you on Hwy 83. Travel south 12 ½ miles to county road F to Marker #1.

General History of the raid as you travel to Marker #1: The United States Government decided to split the Sioux and Cheyenne Nations, after the battle at the Little Big Horn River in Montana with General Custer, in 1876 which is also known as Custer's Land Stand.

The Sioux were sent to a reservation in South Dakota and the Northern Cheyenne were taken to the Darlington Agency in Oklahoma. They were promised an easy and bountiful hunting grounds, good medical aid and that anytime they wished not to remain there they were free to leave.

Things were not what they seemed. As we all know treaties and promises were readily broken. The Northern Cheyenne were put on the reservation with the Southern Cheyenne with whom they did not always get along. They were given only two days' rations of food per person which had to last them a week, and after coming to a strange land with a different climate, they suffered from many of the white man's diseases, which they knew nothing about and received no medical attention.

When they first arrived at the Darlington Agency there were close to 1000 Cheyenne and in two years there were just over 300 remaining. They repeatedly went to the Government agent and begged him to fulfill the promises that were made to them or allow them to return to their homelands among the Black Hills of Dakota. Their requests were always denied.

So, on September 9, 1878, 92 warriors and the rest women and children left their camp fires burning and their teepee poles standing and crept away during the night to begin their 1500-mile journey back to their beloved homeland.

This group was led by Chief Dull Knife and Chief Little Wolf. The following morning troops were immediately sent out after them. They came upon the Indians first in Northern Oklahoma where there were a few small skirmishes and the first fighting in Kansas occurred just 40 miles south of Dodge City.

When they reached the Arkansas River the Indians outsmarted the soldiers by starting prairie fires around their horses, spooking them and enabling the Northern Cheyenne to cross the river. The next major battle was at Squaws Den in Scott County. From there they moved up through Sheridan, Decatur and Rawlins Counties. There were 31 settlers killed between Scott and Rawlins County with 18 being killed here in Decatur County.



Marker #1 is at N39° 38.395' W100° 32.092'

About 9 ½ miles south of this point the Northern Cheyenne committed their first act of violence in our area on Sunday, September 29, 1878, on the north fork of the Solomon in Sheridan County.

That Sunday, two boys, who had come west to take homesteads, started back to their homes in the east, traveling in a covered wagon. They sighted smoke down the stream and believing that the home of one of the settlers was burning, hurried to the scene. It didn't take them long to see that the fire was caused by a large band of Indians.

They started to turn back when they saw what lay ahead of them. The Indians fired upon them and one of the boys, John Young, was hit under the shoulder blade with a bullet which lodged on his breast bone. The other boy, Charles Leonard, drove the team back to a settlement on Prairie Dog Creek. Charles Leonard started for Oberlin which was about twelve miles north for a physician and to report the Indians coming. He reached Oberlin the next morning around 8 a.m. Dr. Alexis W. Bariteau, who had only been in Oberlin six days quickly responded to the request and not knowing at the time had a very narrow escape as he passed between two bodies of Indians, who were not over a quarter of a mile on either side of him, but fortunately they did not see him. Without the necessary instruments the injured boy, John Young, died three days later and was buried in the Shibboleth Cemetery (.8 miles east, ¼ mile south, and following the trail up the hill).

The less than 75 warriors swept out on the flanks while the main body hardly slowed as they continued their homeward journey following along the Great Western Cattle Trail.

Monday, September 30th, one group of Indian scouts was on the Prairie Dog before daylight, they found the homes deserted and contented themselves with gutting two or three since the owners had been warned and witnessed the destruction of their property from their hiding places in the brush.

Oberlin was probably saved by the fact that several men were preparing to start for Buffalo Park (Park, KS) to meet their families and were in town securing supplies for the trip. When the Indian scouts came on the hill south of town and saw such a crowd of men they turned southwest and struck the Texas cattle trail, where the main band of Cheyenne was.

While one band of Cheyenne was raiding the Prairie Dog and moving north, the others struck the south fork of the Sappa. The settlers there had NOT been warned and were engaged in their normal day's activities.

Moving to Marker #2 is at N39° 44.501' W100° 37.109'
West on F Lane 4 miles to 700 Road, then North 7 miles to M Lane

One group headed northwest and proceeded to the cabin of H. D. Colvin (About 1 mile southeast of this marker). Being in possession of several guns, the Colvin's were able to withstand the attack without loss of property or life.

The other Cheyenne warriors had continued to the north of the Colvin place where James G. Smith, his son, Wat, and John C. Hudson had just arrived to put up hay (About ½ mile northeast of this marker). One small group of Indians came down the bluffs to the flat. They chased the Smiths and Hudson into the timber along the creek, shooting James four times and hitting him with six arrows. He crawled into a thick brush and the Indians, thinking they had killed him, left him. Another Indian followed Wat who ran down the creek. The Indian kept shooting at him with arrows but fortunately missed him each time. Then taking out his tomahawk he rode up to the boy who still carried his pitchfork and when the Indian came close to him he whirled around and stuck the Indian in the abdomen with the fork and the Indian left him. Wat then was able to escape but Hudson died immediately.

While one group was attacking Hudson and the Smiths, another group, having spotted a wagon about ½ mile north of this marker attacked and killed William Laing and his son Freeman, a boy about 14 years of age. The Laings were on their way to the Kirwin Land Office to pay for land they had pre-empted on. Two young neighbor ladies, Louisa and Eva Van Cleave, were in the wagon with them. The ladies were on their way to Norton for schooling since Oberlin didn't yet have normal training. The four had proceeded on the journey in the covered wagon about eight miles when they were met by the band of 12 Indians. The Indians had not been seen by the parties in the wagon until within gunshot range. They immediately surrounded the wagon and began to salute Mr. Laing, who was driving, with the usual greeting of the red man. Two of the Indians, with seeming cordiality, grasped the hands of father and son, and two others fired from behind, killing both instantly, the father

falling backward into the lap of one of the young ladies, and the boy sinking upon his knees in the wagon.

Provisions had been prepared for the long journey and were in the wagon. These the Indians took out, and while they devoured these the young ladies were compelled to hold the horses. After which the horses were cut loose, the wagon cover torn off, and the trembling females taken to the creek where the band was encamped. Here they were ravished in a heartless manner. Shawls and aprons, jewels, bonnets, and necklaces were taken from the girls, and then ordered to go to a house about half a mile west, the home of the Anthony/ Keefers.

The Anthony/Keefer was the only home that did not suffer losses. A group of warriors made their way to the Anthony/Keefer home (About ¼ mile northwest of this marker). But a cattleman named Pat Lynch and his helper, Jimmy Kelly, had stopped for breakfast. Lynch having dealt with the Indians when he was foreman for the Union Pacific Railroad got the family inside and barred the door. The dugout had only one window. The Indians had turned loose the captive girls who were near the dugout. After the girls entered the home the Indians made the raid. Mr. Lynch stood in front of the window with the gun resting on the window frame; he shot and killed the first Indian who came in front of it. (This bullet is now on display at the Decatur County Museum). After the Indian was shot, they left and did not return.

Another interesting topic here is the Homestead of Lydia Barns, sister of James Butler Hickok aka Wild Bill Hickok (About 1/2-mile northeast of this marker). In the fall of 1879 (3 years after Wild Bill Hickok was killed by Jack McCall) they arrived in Decatur County by covered wagon.

Her husband died in 1888 but she managed her family in a sod house, was postmaster of the Hooker post office for several years and oversaw the farm and its cattle and hogs.

Lorenzo Hickok, brother to Wild Bill, also was a land owner in the Hooker Community (just north of Lydia's place) for many years and made many trips and long visits to the county. He was held in highest esteem by all who knew him here.

Moving to Marker #3 is at N39° 44.508' W100° 37.672'
West on M Lane 1 mile to 600 Road

Moses Abernathy and Marcellus Felt were out rounding up cattle when the Indians overtook them on the hill southwest of this point. Abernathy once said to G. Webb Bertram, when asked, if he was not afraid of the Indians. He said no, he had treaties with all of them.

George Fredrick Walters, who was the son-in-law of Moses Abernathy, had been to Oberlin with a load of lime, when he saw the Indians coming up from behind him. He unyoked his oxen and tied them to the wagon wheel. A diligent search failed to find Walters. He doubtless ran into the brushes along the creek about a mile southwest of this point but had been shot and died there. When the prairies were burned off by a fire several weeks later his body was found and buried there right where it lay. Ten years later the body was exhumed by the Grand Army of the Republic and laid to rest with the other victims of the raid.

Seeing Abernathy and Felt shot, John Irwin of Kirwin, Kansas and his friend W. M. Lull ran for their lives. They were in a dugout southeast of this point and could have defended themselves as they had guns but became frightened. They attempted to unhitch their horses and ride away but were killed before they could unhitch. Irwin fell on one side of the wagon, Lull upon the other, near the horses' heels. The Indians, not content with shooting them down, took a new ax which was in their wagon, and stuck it into the back of the head of one of the men at the base of the skull and left it buried to the handle.

As the different groups of warriors made their way west they came to the homestead of Ferdinand Westphalen (south of the creek). Ferdinand had heard the shooting and thought the other settlers were target practicing and hitched up the horses and was just putting up the tail gate when the Indians came and wanted the horses. He refused, and the Indians shot him, and the oldest boy, John, who was on his pony. Mrs. Westphalen was shot in the shoulder by an arrow because she refused to give up her money. The two older Westphalen boys, Peter and Bill ran for their lives while Mrs. Westphalen took the other five children and hid in the tall grass till late that night.

Moving on to Marker #4 is at N39° 44.486' W100° 38.810'
West on M Lane 1 mile to 500 Road

The Cheyenne went into day camp at this point and remained until about four or five o'clock in the evening waiting for the women, children and the elderly to catch up. During this time Eddie Race and Elwin Judkins were on their way from the Judkin's cattle ranch to Oberlin. They were riding into Bridle's place for dinner, seeing Indians they thought them a bunch of cowboys in camp, and did not discover their mistake until too late to get away. Several Indians rode out to meet them, jerked the bridle reins out of their hands and took them into camp on the run. They took the horses, saddles, bridles, blankets, and everything of value even taking their cowboy hats. They were then turned over to the squaws, who threatened their lives by brandishing butcher knives around their heads as if to cut their throats or scalp them and persecuted them in various ways. Finally, old Chief Dull Knife, took them by their hands, led them about fifty yards, and said "go east." They made their way to Keefer's ranch that afternoon and later to Oberlin.

Moving on to Marker #5 is at N39° 43.667' W100° 39.961'
South on 500 Road .5 miles then follow road west
and south 1.2 miles to marker

A few days before the raid, John Humphrey came home from Buffalo Park and told his folks the Indians were south of the railroad and he thought it would be advisable to get out before they got there. His father, Ephraim Palmer Humphrey, a man of about 65 years of age, thought it would be better to stay on the claim. At about noon on that Monday, September 30th, they were cutting wild hay in the head of a draw about a quarter of a mile from their house when a group of Indians rode up and killed old man Humphrey and wounded John, who escaped to a neighbor's home and warned them of their danger. Later John was taken to Oberlin to be cared for by his mother, but four weeks he suffered till death relieved him.

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Moving on to Marker #6 is at N39° 43.633' W100° 44.268'
Follow road west, south and then west 1.5 miles to 300 Road, then
south .5 miles to K Lane, then west 2 miles to 100 Road, then north 1
mile to L Lane, then west .8 miles to marker

The Cheyenne left their camp fires burning from Marker #4 and all moved northwest crossing over to the North Sappa coming upon the Laing homestead towards evening; shot and killed John and William Jr. who were working in the field. The Indians were further enraged because the Laings had collected old teepee poles to be used for firewood. They brutally ravaged Mrs. Laing and the two older girls. They then put all three girls between feather ticks on the bed and set fire to everything that would burn that was not useful to them. Mrs. Laing, dazed and suffering from abuse, finally drug herself and the girls out of the house, hiding for a time in the brush along the creek, and the four walked eight miles in the night to safety at the Keefer Ranch arriving about two o'clock in the morning. Several accounts say that Mrs. Laing became demented from her terrible experience and great loss. Within a few short hours she lost her husband, three sons, and all their worldly possessions; in the morning all was bright and happy, at night all was death and sadness. The only thing not destroyed or burned was a little half-grown kitten.

Moving to Marker #7 is at N39° 46.033' W100° 43.329'
Turn around and go back east .8 miles on L Lane to 100 Road, then
north 2.7 miles to marker

At night the Cheyenne headmen took the women and children across the moonlit Sappa divide and down the long, deep-canyon of *Lambs Draw* that opened to the valley of the Beaver. Just east of this marker the Cheyenne rested.

Moving on to Marker #8 is at N39° 45.363' W100° 41.568'
Turn around and go back south .7 miles to N Lane, then east
1.5 miles to marker

On the North Sappa Theodore Steadman was shot through the arm. Steadman recovered, but owed his life to the superstition of the Indians against killing a cripple. Steadman was in his wagon with a log which had been cut to be used as a ridge-pole for a dugout. Earlier in life Steadman had lost one of his legs and had it replaced with a wooden leg. The Indians after shooting and wounding him, rode up and upon seeing that he was a cripple they turned and left him, fearing "bad medicine" would come to them if they injured him further. This happened about ½ mile west of the bridge.

Not far from the Laing homestead on the north side of the North Fork of the Sappa the body of Ed Miskelly aged 20 was found near Mud Draw. The dead cowboy was lying beside the trail on his back, his hat off his head, and his gauntlet gloves on his hands and his quirt hanging on one wrist. He had been shot from ambush straight through the heart. His horse, a big black star-faced animal, saddle and firearms were gone. The body of John Wright who was with the group that were in pursuit of the Indians was found fourteen days after the raid, a short distance southwest of this marker.

Continue East on county road 12 miles to south edge of Oberlin
then north on Hwy 83 to Hwy 36.

Information for your journey back to Oberlin and the Oberlin Cemetery:

At this point the Cheyenne moved on into Rawlins County. Additional information from this point northwest:

Christian Frederick Hamper, another Decatur County homesteader of Beaver Township was killed in the raid but was in Rawlins County at the time and was buried where he fell. A lone Civil War marker, C. F. Hamper Co. 89 Ind. Inf., for him is in a pasture located on the NE1/4 16-2-32.

Henry Schidler and William Marshall nephews of Fred Hamper were here visiting from Indiana.

Fred Hamper along with Henry Schidler and William Marshall were looking for his stolen horses and mules but without success, they were returning home when Hamper met Henry 'Pat' Rathbun. Hamper sent Schidler and Marshall home by way of Beaver Creek. The two men were riding leisurely along were overtaken and killed. They were buried where they were killed, but later buried at the Cedar Bluffs Cemetery. Their markers read "Was Killed by the Indians, Oct. 1, 1878." Schidler was 26 years, 7 mo. 10 days old and Marshall was 24 years, 11 mo. 11 days old.

**Moving on to Marker #9 which is in the Oberlin Cemetery
N39° 49.684' W100° 30.915'**

East 1 mile from intersection Hwy 36 & 83

The dead were brought to Oberlin. They were wrapped in sheets, put in pine boxes, and laid to rest in the cemetery on the hill.

Those killed that day and buried in the Oberlin Cemetery:

James G. Smith, (his body was exhumed in 1908 when his wife died and is buried next to her in Block 23 Lot 10)

John Hudson

Wm. Laing, John C. Laing, Wm. Laing, Jr., Freeman Laing

Moses Abernathy

Marcellus Felt

Ferdinand Westphalen, John Westphalen

George Fredrick Walters he has two stones one the other Civil Marker. Currently, we have no information as to why two stones.

E. P. Humphrey, John Humphrey, (E. P and John are buried in Block 8 Lot 14. The wife and mother, Eliza Humphrey is buried beside them)

W. M. Lull

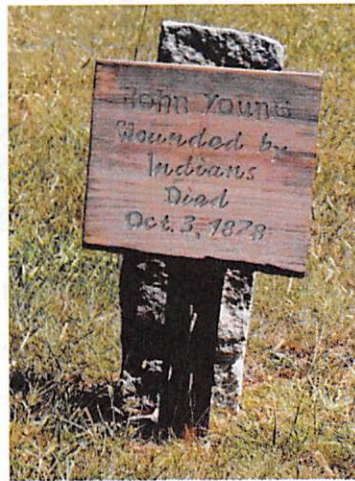
John Irwin

John Wright

Those killed that day but NOT buried in the Oberlin Cemetery.

Ed Miskelly (his body was taken back to Buffalo Park (Park, Kansas) where buried in an unmarked grave in the old cemetery.

John Young who is buried in the Shibboleth Cemetery



Christian Frederick Hamper buried where he was killed in Rawlins County



Henry Schidler and William Marshall both buried in the Cedar Bluffs Cemetery



A monument was erected by the State of Kansas and Decatur County in the Oberlin Cemetery. \$1500 was appropriated by the State and to this was added \$300 by Decatur County from the general funds in 1911. Imprinted on the memorial is: "In Memory of the Pioneer Settlers of Decatur County, killed in the Last Indian Massacre in Kansas, by a Band of Northern Cheyenne Indians, Sept 30, 1878."



