



FIVE HEADSTONES (above) mark the graves at Oberlin Cemetery of some of the men killed during the Last Indian Raid. Chief Dull Knife and Chief Little Wolf (below) led the Cheyenne Indians from Oklahoma to Kansas, then up into Nebraska.

Indian Raid claimed 18 lives, 130 years ago in Decatur County

The Last Indian Raid Museum in Oberlin will celebrate 50 years at the end of the month, but the celebration also will commemorate the 130th anniversary of the Last Indian Raid on Kansas soil, which claimed the lives of 18 men in Decatur County.

The raid on Sept. 30, 1878, gave rise to the name of the museum, at the south end of Oberlin's Main Street. There's information about the raid from both the settlers' and Indian's points of view, plus a short video to watch and many photos.

At the Oberlin Cemetery on U.S. 36 east side of town, people can see a limestone monument commemorating the raid and the grave stones of the victims.

A band of Cheyenne Indians, led by Chiefs Little Wolf and Dull Knife, escaped an Oklahoma reservation, where many were starving, and made for the tribe's hunting grounds in the Dakotas.

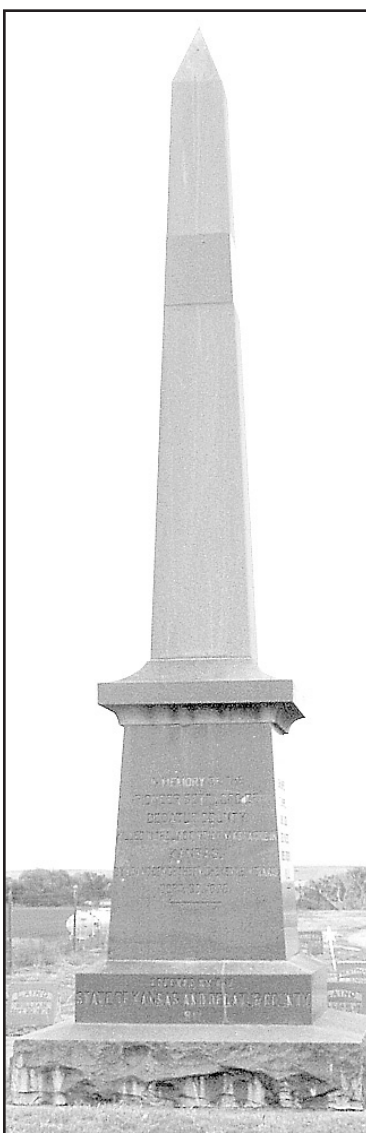
The Indians had been sent to the reservation in the spring of 1877, according to the book, "Massacre of Indians and Cheyenne Indian Raid," written from government reports and Kansas Historical Society documents. The reservation headquarters, called the Darlington Agency, was in Indian Territory, now Oklahoma.

The group of Cheyenne, 89 men and 146 women and children, left the agency Sept. 9 after the government turned down their request to return home.

Troops were sent after the band and they caught up in Oklahoma, but the Indians pushed on after a conflict just over the Kansas line along Bear Creek.

Approaching Decatur County, the band moved northeasterly to a settlement at the Sheridan Post Office, about 2 1/2 miles east and 2 1/2 miles south of the present town of Selden, where they looted the post office and store.

In September 1958, 80 years after the raid, Probate Judge George Nellans, in a book about the events, wrote that people didn't know why the Indians went through the settlement, because it was out of their way. Some thought the band needed



AT THE CEMETERY, a large limestone monument was erected in memory of those killed.

supplies. From Sheridan, the Indians headed northwest and were held off by Mr. and Mrs. H.D. Colvin, who lived five miles southwest of Oberlin between the James E. Smith and John C. Hudson's places. The Indians killed Mr. Hudson and fatally wounded James E. Smith in a field about a mile north of Colvin's home. Wat Smith, who was in a field working with the men, was wounded but made his way to warn other settlers. Many left their homes and headed

into Oberlin for safety.

One of the survivors was Henry Anthony, who spotted the Indians from the front yard of his family's sod house. He went to warn others. Some reports say he was 6, while Judge Nellans said he was 13.

From the field, the Indians went up the creek, arriving at J.J. Keefer's home, but the occupants had been warned by young Anthony.

The Indians moved farther up the creek, where two young women were taken, but they later were released alive.

The band ran into William Laing Sr. and his son 4 1/2 miles south and four miles west of Oberlin, killing both.

By the end of the raid, 18 men had died: Mr. Hudson, Mr. Smith, Mr. Laing and son, John, Moses Abernathy, Marcellus Felt, Ferdinand and Thomas Westphalen, George Walters, L.T. Lull, John Irwin, E.P. Humphrey, John Young, John Wright, Edward Miskelly, G.F. Hamper and two others.

Men from the area joined and tracked the Indians. On Oct. 1, they found three near the Decatur/Rawlins County line.

Troops also pursued the Indians, who were tracked into the Sand Hill country north of the two branches of the Platte River in Nebraska. North of the Niobrara River, the Indians divided into two bands, one under each chief.

The group following Chief Dull Knife was surrounded by troops from Fort Robinson and Camp Sheridan. On Jan. 9, 1879, that band fled from Fort Robinson. Troopers caught up and killed them about 40 miles northwest of the fort.

Those following Chief Little Wolf escaped.

The monument in the cemetery was erected in 1911.

The museum will be open during the Mini Sapa Celebration on Saturday, Oct. 4, if anyone wants to learn more about the raid. The museum also is open from 10 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, except in the winter months.



OUTSIDE HIS HOME is Henry Anthony (middle boy in suit), who warned others in Decatur County of the approaching Indians the day of the raid.

— Story by Kimberly Davis