1. Back in the Dog Days

Some time in the 1500's some Indians left Canada, for what reason can only be guessed. Leading their dogs they began a long migration on foot through North Dakota. They had left the lakes and bushes of the north country forever. Now they entered the Great Plains of America. From that time on, they were Indians of the Plains. This meant they had to struggle to survive. It also meant that if they did survive, they were bound to become a powerful and well-known tribe.

They remained near Davil's Lake, North Dakota, for half a century. Part of the tribe hunted while part farmed. About 1600 the two head chiefs fasted and prayed to the Great Spirit. One chief received the seed for bread. the other received the seed of a sacred plant called tobacco. The chief that received the seeds of the sacred plant was called No Vitals. The Great Spirit taught him the ceremonies to be used during the planting and harvesting of the seeds. These ceremonies were to make the people grow strong enough to become owners of a large territory.

About 1610 or 1612 Chief No Vitals led perhaps 400 people up the Missouri River. These people called themselves Absarokas, or the River People. Those who stayed behind were known as the Hidatsas.

The Absarokas spent about 15 years near the junction of the Missouri and the Knife Rivers. By

about 1630 they wandered into an area of Montana. They walked along the Missouri River as far as the Milk River, then they followed the Milk River into Canada. A few may have stayed there. The rest moved southward to a place where they saw stones floating on the water. This was probably Great Salt Lake in Utah. From Great Salt Lake they went east where they saw land that seemed to be on fire. Maybe this was an under-ground coal fire or the Yellowstone geyser basin. The Absarokas circled around and went north over the plains back to Knife River and joined the Hidatsas. They had made a complete circle.

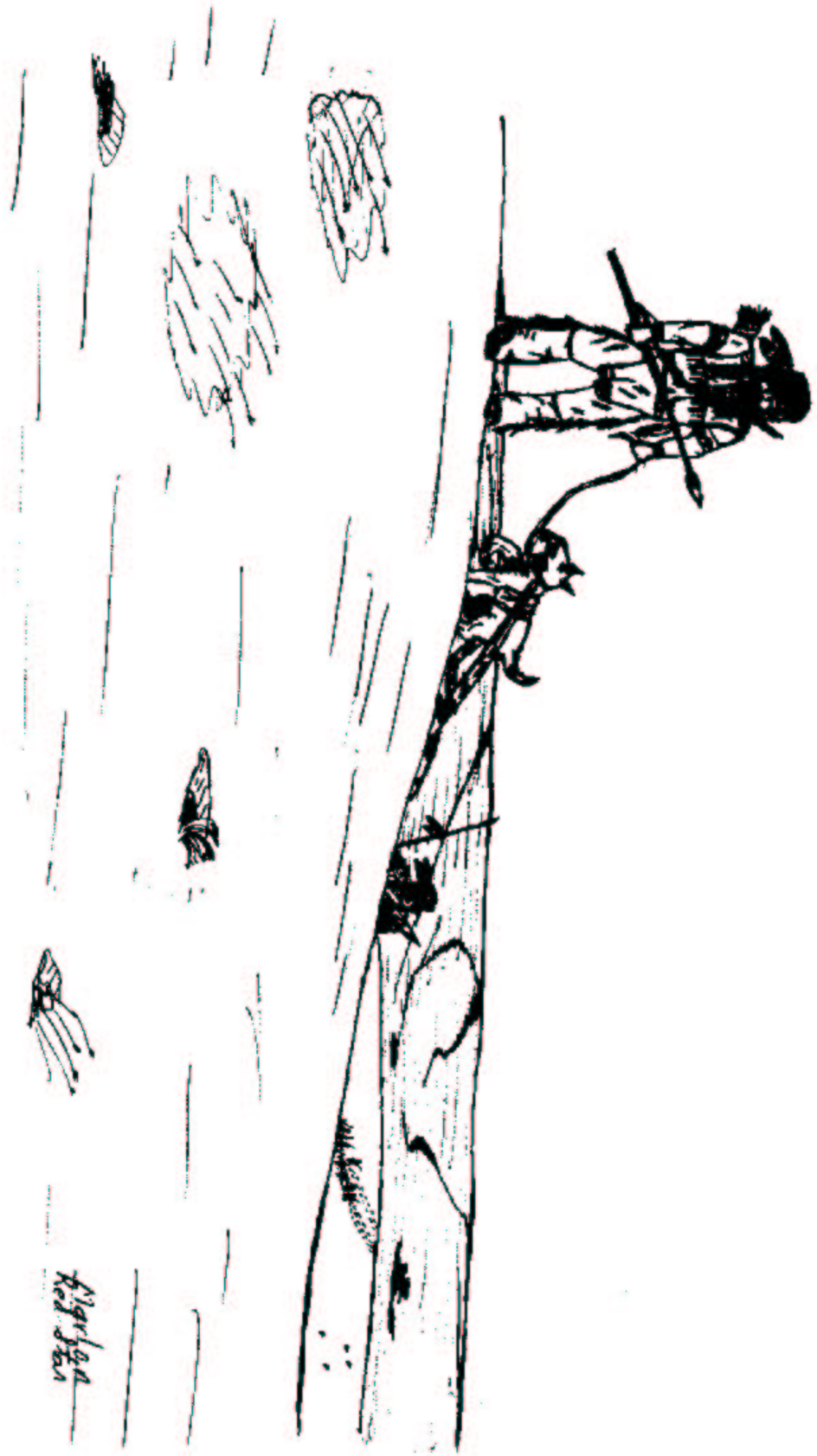
It may have been sometime at the end of the 1600's that the Absaroka Tribe split again. A few stayed behind. The rest began a second loop. It was the last time they were seen on foot.

Chief Young White Buffalo led a war party near the Green River in northwestern Colorado. His men raided Indians and brought back to the Absarokas their first horses. These horses had come from the south. Kiowas and Shoshonis had gotten horses from the Comanches, who had originally gotten them from the Spaniards. By 1740 the Absarokas were skillful horsemen.

With the horses the tribe could move quicker and escape like lightning. Meat was easier to kill. Horses changed the Absarokas into a vigorous, war-like tribe.

The first steel knives came from northern Indians who got them from French fur traders in Canada.

Two groups of Absarokas met on the Powder River in Wyoming. After the reunion, one group



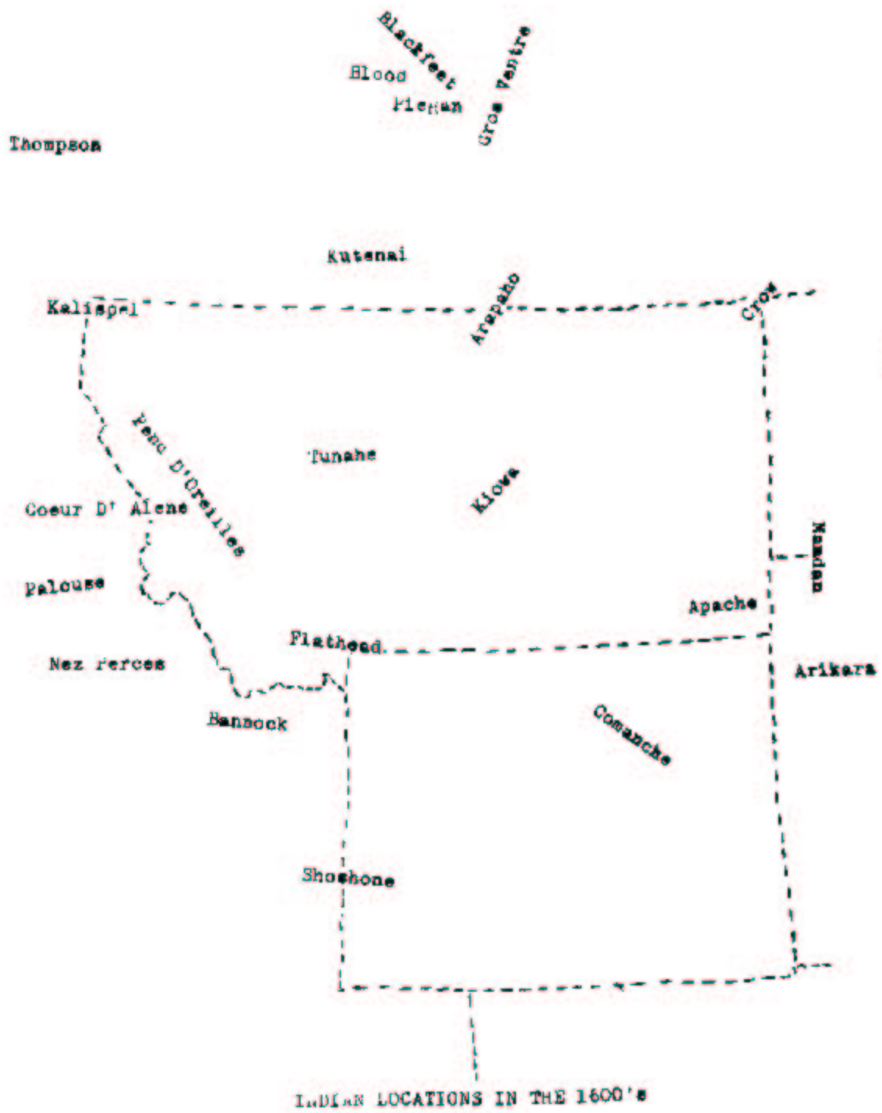
left. They usually lived near the Missouri River. The other group settled in the area between the Musselshell River in Montana and the Powder River in Wyoming. This area soon became known as Crow Country.

2. White Man

In 1743 the first white man came. They were the La Verendrye sons. The Absarokas met them along Tullock Fork. The Frenchmen wanted to trade furs. French fur traders later translated "Absaroka" into English as "Crow". The Tribe became generally known by this name. Those living in Crow Country were called Mountain Crows; Those near the Missouri River were River Crows.

Around the time of the American Revolutionary War, 1775 to 1776, the Crow Indians met a band of Kiowas near the Black Hills in South Dakota. A cultural treaty was made and children were exchanged so each tribe would learn the other's language. By the end of the 1700's, the Kiowas were all south in the area of Oklahoma.

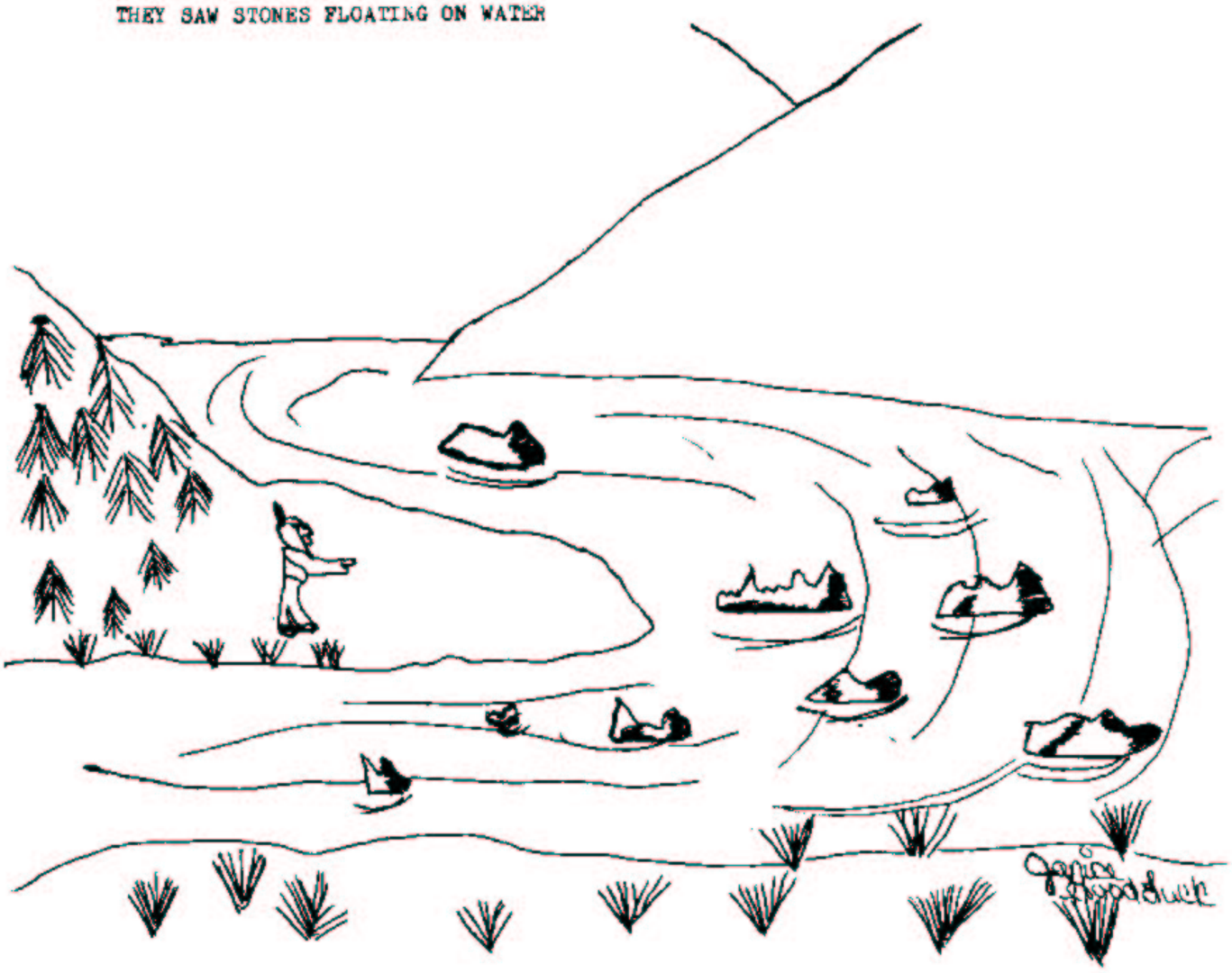
One of the worst experiences to live through was white man's diseases. By 1802 smallpox reduced the Crow Tribe from an estimated 10,000 people to about 1500. Smallpox remained an enemy for a hundred years.



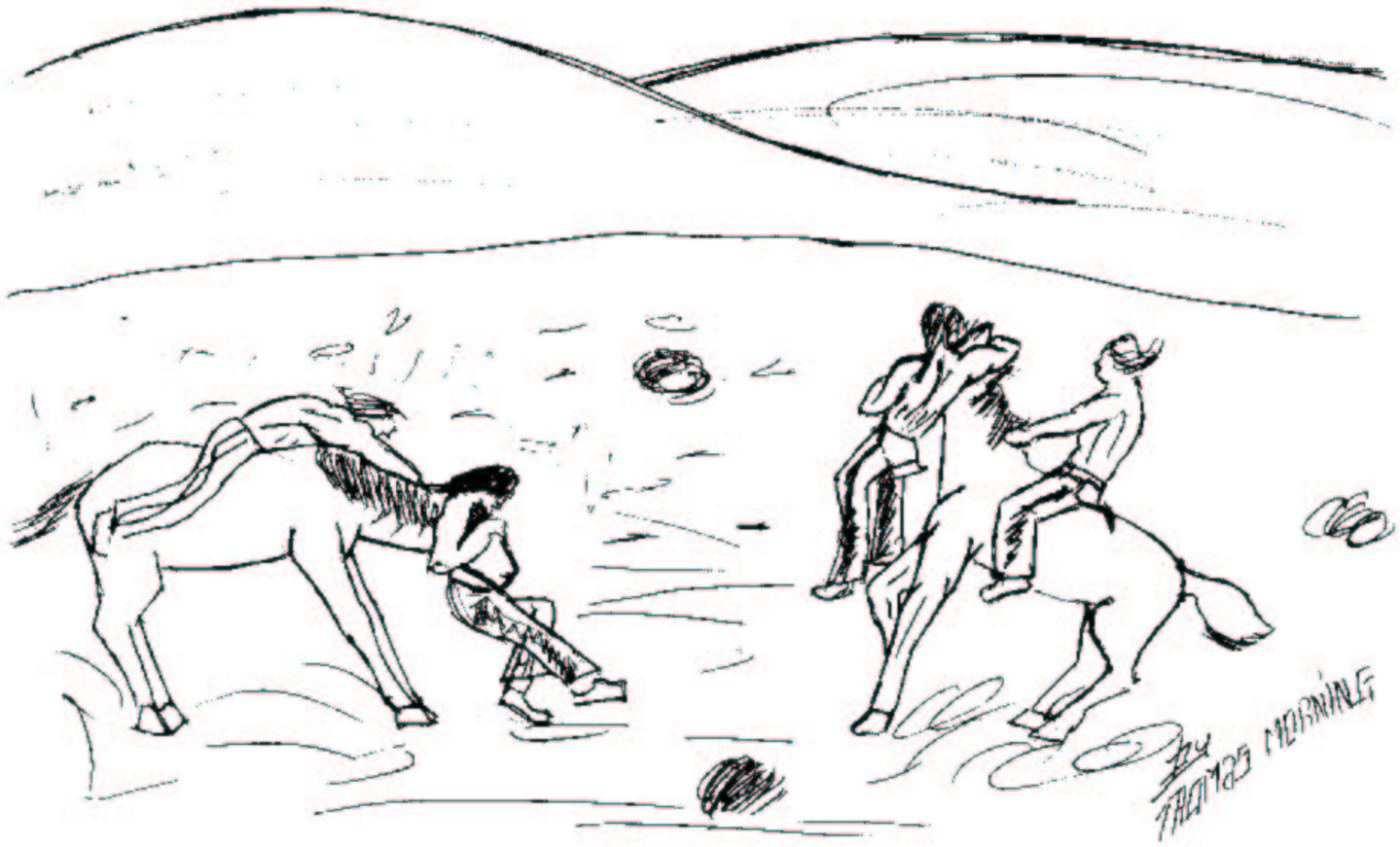
INDIAN LOCATIONS IN THE 1600's

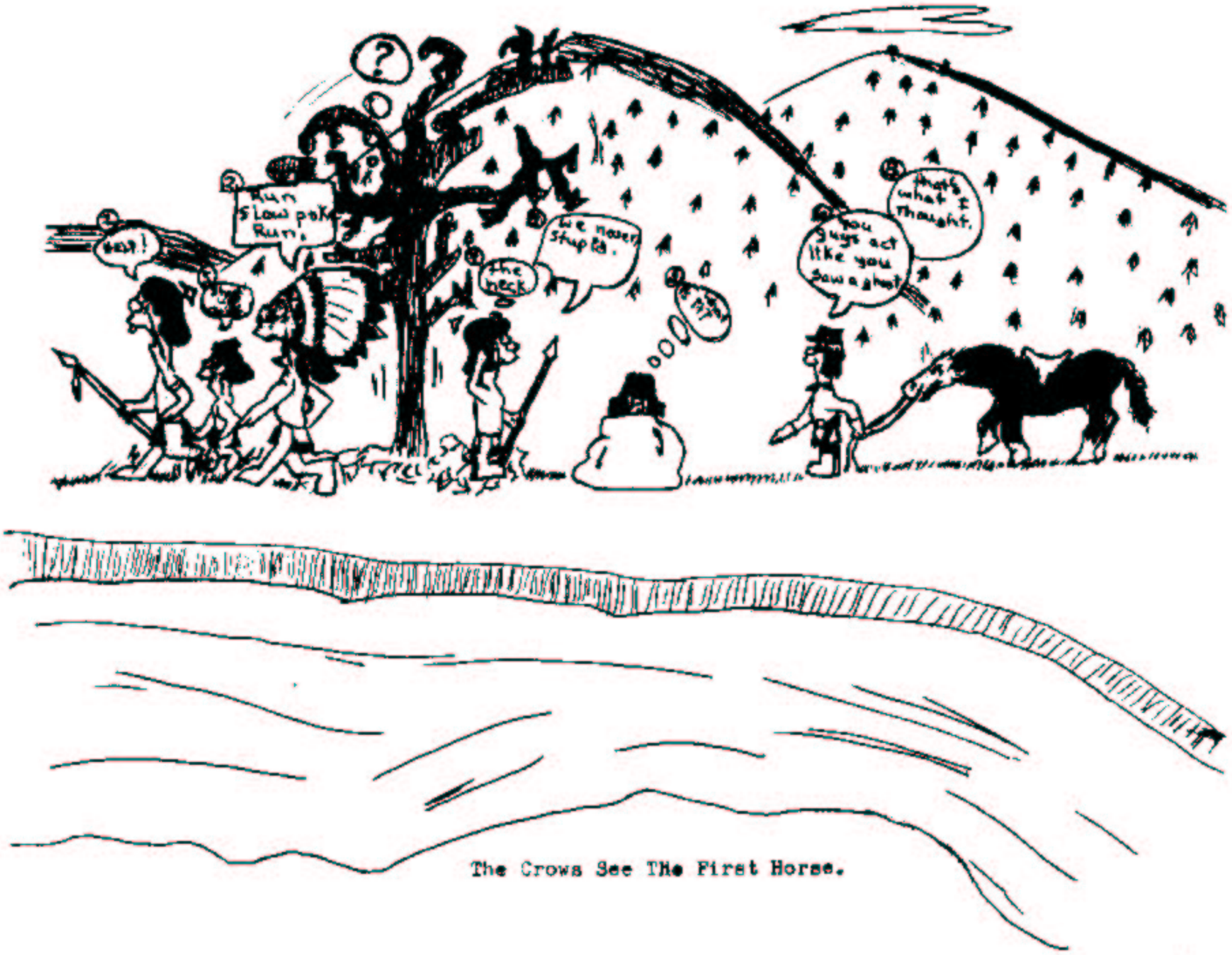
INDIAN LOCATIONS IN THE 1700'S

THEY SAW STONES FLOATING ON WATER

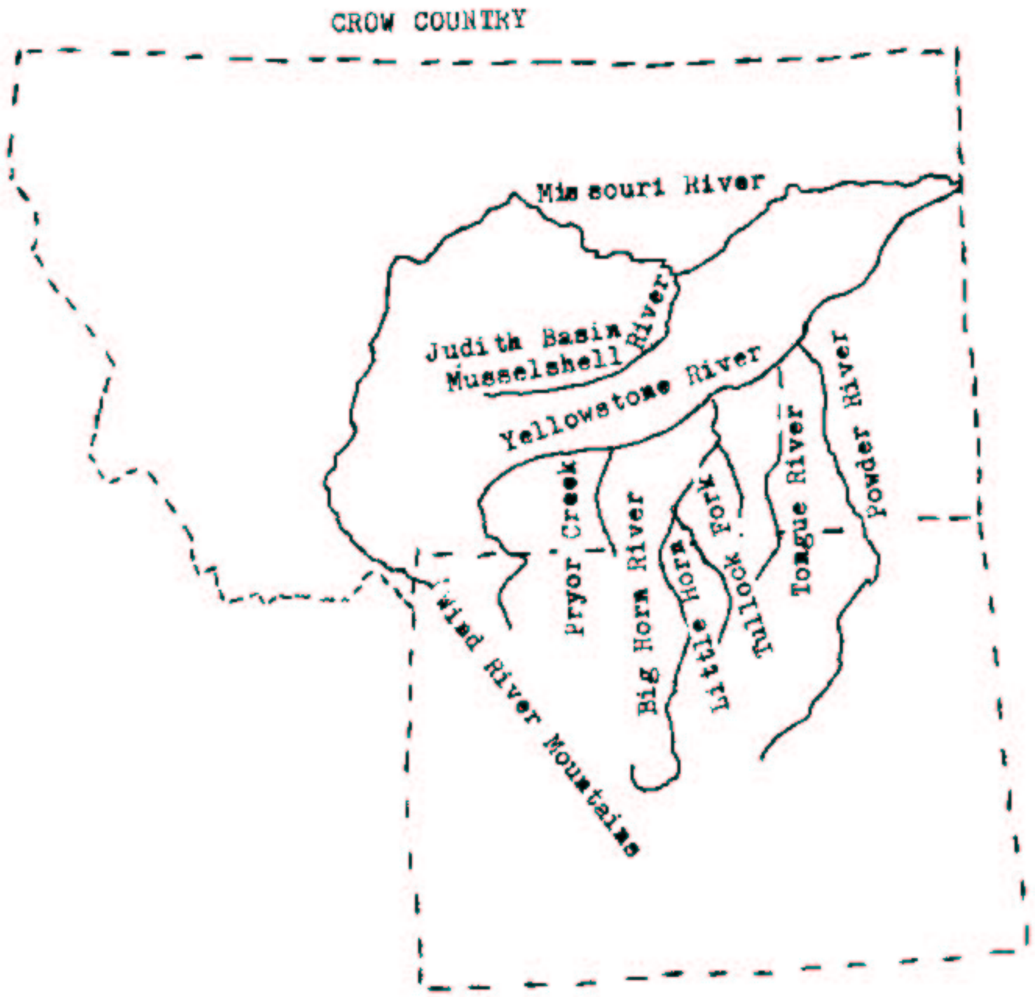


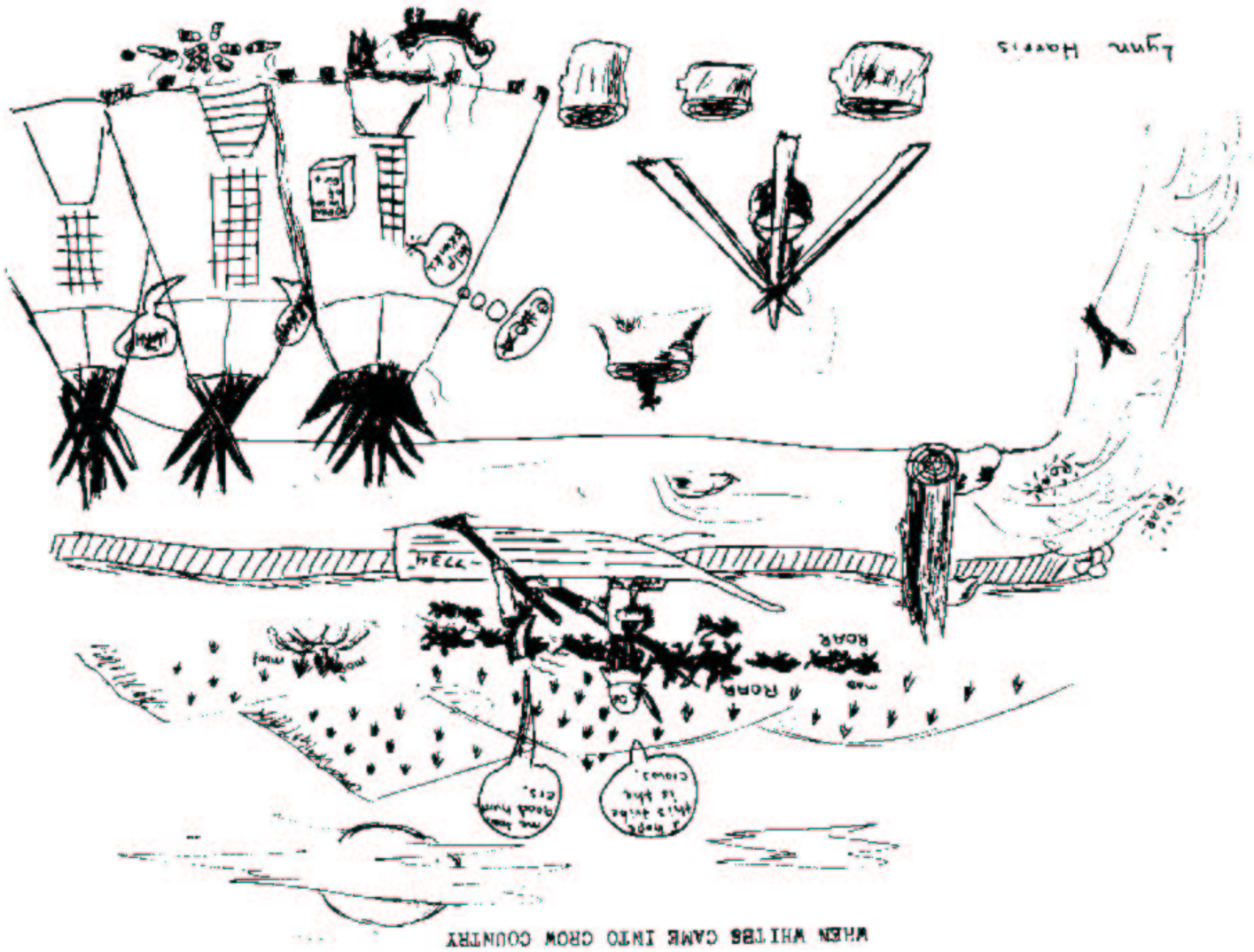
WHEN THE CROWS RODE THEIR FIRST HORSES





The Crows See THe First Horse.


CROW COUNTRY
Missouri River
Judith Basin
Musselshell River
Yellowstone River
Pryor Creek
Big Horn River
Little Horn
Pullock Fork
Tongue River
Powder River
Wind River Mountains


Lynn Harris
WHEN WHITES CAME INTO CROW COUNTRY