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SMOKE SIGNALS
IN CROW (APSÁALOOKE) COUNTRY:
BEYOND THE CAPTURE OF HORSES
FROM THE LEWIS & CLARK EXPEDITION

by C. Adrian Heidenreich, Ph.D.

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(Goes to War in a Good Way)



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C. Adrian Heidenreich

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Beyond the Capture of Horses from the Lewis and Clark Expedition

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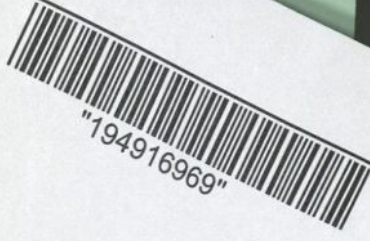
Dedicated
to the Crow (Apsáalooke) people and culture –
the depth of which adds immense interest
and understanding to events in history.

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CONTENTS

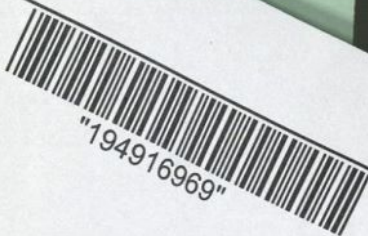
Preface	vii
Map: Trails Blazed in the North-West	1
William Clark Reaches the Yellowstone Valley	3
Clark's Diplomatic Interest in the Crow	7
The Value of Horses in Crow Culture	13
Origins of the Horse Among the Crow	15
Plains Indians Capturing Horses	17
Lewis and Clark's Worries About Losing Horses	21
Blackfeet Attempt to Capture Horses from Lewis	23
Horses Captured from Clark	25
Pryor Loses the Rest of the Horses	29
Clark's Response to Capture of His Horses	33
Did Francois Larocque Affect Clark?	35
The Diplomacy of the Crow	41
Did the Crow Take the Horses?	45
Map: The Crow Nation Before 1855	49
Crow Country	49
Clark in the Country of the Crow	53
Clark as Red-Headed Chief	59
Clark's Role in the Crow Fur Trade	65
Mountain Men, Fur Trade Camps, and Crow Villages	69
The Rendezvous of the Rocky Mountain Fur Trade	73
The Crow and Fur Trade Posts	77
The 1825 Friendship Treaty with the Crow	81
Missionary Activity in Crow Country	85
Scientific and Artistic Enterprise	89
Early Tourism in Crow Country	93
A Long-term Perspective on Clark and the Crow	97
Notes	100
References	101
Picture Credits	109
Acknowledgments	111
Index to Map of the Historical Crow Nation	112

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PREFACE

Along with many other boys growing up in America, as a youth I was interested in "Indians." During graduate work in Anthropology at the University of Oregon, I was encouraged by my professors, including Homer Barnett, Theodore Stern, Malcolm McFee, and Joseph Jorgensen, all of whom had worked closely with American Indians.

In 1968, I came to Billings, Montana. While teaching at Rocky Mountain College, an enlarged world opened to me. My Indian students – Crow, Hidatsa, Blackfeet, Cheyenne, Assiniboine, Gros Ventre, Sioux, Chippewa, Cree, Salish, Kootenai, and others -- wanted to know what I knew about Indians and where I had learned it. They encouraged me to visit their elders, welcomed me into their homes and, eventually, invited me to participate in ceremonies. I was to meet many Native American advisers and colleagues from around Montana and elsewhere.

The academic world was beginning to come to terms with modern Indians. N. Scott Momaday's novel *House Made of Dawn* and Stan Steiner's *The New Indians* were both published in 1968, and Vine Deloria, Jr.'s, *Custer Died for Your Sins* followed in 1969.

There was other work that was immediate to my interests. In 1968, historian John Upton Terrell published his book *The Six Turnings; Major Changes in the American West, 1806-1834*, which included discussion of the impact of Lewis and Clark and the fur trade. That same year, two noted historians published articles in *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*. Ernest S. Osgood wrote "The Return Journey in 1806: William Clark on the Yellowstone," and Paul Russell Cutright wrote "Lewis on the Marias 1806." Smithsonian Ethnologist John C. Ewers had edited fur trader Edwin Denig's "Of the Crow" in 1961, and in 1968 his book of essays on *Indian Life On the Upper Missouri* was published. Dr. Ewers was to be my mentor during a Smithsonian Post-Doctoral Fellowship.

That was the beginning of this story, and it could go on and on. After teaching Anthropology and Sociology at Rocky Mountain College for many years, in 1977 a position opened in Native American Studies at Eastern Montana College – now Montana State University–Billings. The selection committee, chaired by Crow educator and linguist Dale Old Horn, recommended me.

The result of all this is that over the years I have gotten involved in all sorts of things: social events and ceremonies, history and politics. Heywood and Mary Lou Big Day adopted me, and Philip Beaumont, Sr., gave me a Crow name, *Dúxxiileeitche* (Goes to War in a Good Way), to describe my cultural advocacy and diplomacy.

The Crow (Apsáalooke) people still exist 200 years after the Lewis and Clark Expedition. They have had the courage and strength to persist, and their culture is vibrant. Members of the Tribe have participated in the July events each year at Pompey's Pillar National Monument. The Crow Tribe is an official host of the "Clark on the Yellowstone" National Signature Event in 2006. Many other tribes also will participate in events sponsored by the Montana Tribal Tourism Alliance.

My own interest, excitement, and participation continues. I hope that *Smoke Signals in Crow (Apsáalooke) Country* contributes to the ongoing understanding of images and relationships in intercultural exchange beyond the capture of horses during the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

C. Adrian Heidenreich, Ph.D. / *Dúxxiileeitche*
Professor Emeritus of Native American Studies
Montana State University-Billings



Crow Indian on the Lookout
by Alfred Jacob Miller
(The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore)

WILLIAM CLARK REACHES THE YELLOWSTONE VALLEY

In the story of Lewis and Clark are elements of romance and popularization which characterize the American Western historical imagination, from being enamored with the "undaunted courage" of explorers to the classic Western movie peril of white people (wagon trains, stage coaches, and army units, mostly, and an occasional fur trapper, miner, or Pony Express rider) surrounded by aggressive, though often elusive Indians. As historian Ernest S. Osgood wrote in his 1968 article on Clark's Yellowstone River return for Montana, the Magazine of Western History:

"Anyone who has ridden with a pack string lined out along a trail in the western mountains knows that somewhere ahead ride dim figures out of the past, red and white; Indians on the warrior trails or along the trading routes, explorers, lone trappers and then prospectors following the lure of gold." (Osgood 1968: 20)

When Captain William Clark traveled through the Yellowstone country in July 1806 he must have had the feeling that he was being watched. His perceptions were correct, for on the 18th he saw what he thought were smoke signals raised by Crow Indians and believed that they had discovered his trail. The next day Toussaint Charbonneau saw a lone Indian on the high lands across the Yellowstone River and Clark again saw smoke in the mountains. Two days later, 24 of their horses were missing and Clark feared that the Indians who had made the smoke signals had stolen them. (Clark in Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 201, 206, 209-210)

In July 1806 members of the Expedition were homeward bound, on the way back to St. Louis after more than two years on their journey. Lewis and Clark had divided their parties at Travelers' Rest near present Lolo, south of Missoula, Montana. Captain Meriwether Lewis traveled east along the route known to Indians as the "Road to the Buffalo" toward the Missouri River. Captain Clark traveled southeast and divided his men again at Three Forks, sending Sergeant John Ordway and others south down the Missouri to catch up with Lewis.

Finally, the group which would travel east down the Yellowstone River consisted of the following: Captain Clark himself, Sergeant Nathaniel Pryor, Privates John Shields, George Shannon, William Bratton, Francois Labiche, Richard Windsor, Hugh Hall, and George Gibson, Clark's servant York (who was described as a "black white man" by Indians), interpreter Toussaint Charbonneau (Shabono), Sacagawea, and her little baby Baptiste (affectionately called "Pomp" by Clark). (Clark, July 13, 1806, in Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 179).

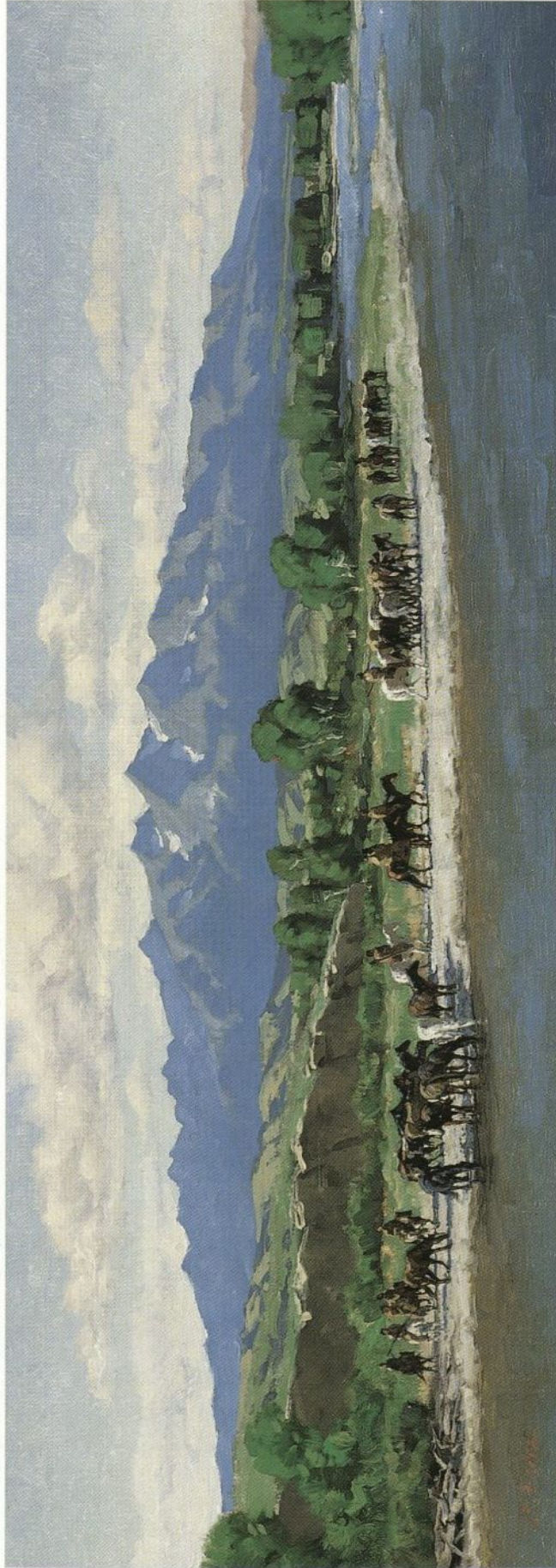
On 15 July, near present Livingston, they reached the Yellowstone. The Crow and several other tribes know this river as Elk River, *lichilikaashaashe* in the Crow language. According to Father Randolph Graczyk, a linguist and Catholic priest residing on the Crow Reservation,

"Since *iichlile* is the original word for 'elk', the earlier name for the Yellowstone River would have been *lichililaashe*. A literal translation of 'yellow stone river' into Crow would be *biishlilaashe*. *lichililaashe*, *biishlilaashe*: they sound very close. This is pure speculation, but I wonder if the name 'Yellowstone' came from a mishearing/ mispronunciation of *iichlilaashe* by early trappers and traders." (Graczyk 2005)

In January 1805 Clark had learned from the Mandan chief Big White (Sheheke) that they call the river *Mee,-ah'-zah Wakpa*, Elk River, and in May 1806 he had learned that the Nez Perce call the river *wewukiye ku.s* (*wah-wo-ko-ye-o-cose*), Elk Water. (Newby 2005; Moulton 1987, Vol. 3: 269; Moulton 1991, Vol. 7: 343, note 7; Medicine Horse 1987: 10, 116). [NOTE #1]

Clark would write that "The Buffalow and Elk is estonishingly noumerous on the banks of the river on each Side, particularly the Elk" and "The Elk on the banks of the river were So abundant that we have not been out of Sight of them to day." He was so impressed with the Yellowstone River valley that he stated "...for me to mention or give an estimate of the differant Spcies of wild animals on this river particularly Buffalow, Elk Antelopes & Wolves would be increditable." (Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 219, 237, 245)

The Crow view the elk as a noble animal with sexual prowess, successful calling and mating, strength, and adaptation. The two "eye" (deciduous) teeth from each elk are used for economic exchange and also for decoration on clothing, particularly necklaces and dresses. In that sense, the river can be interpreted to mean an area of abundance and wealth.



Captain Clark Descending Elk River
by Charles Fritz



President Thomas Jefferson's "Peace Medal"



Captains Lewis and Clark Holding a Council with the Indians
(from the journal of Patrick Gass)

CLARK'S DIPLOMATIC INTEREST IN THE CROW

Lewis and Clark tried to impress every tribe they met with the power of the U.S. government. They paraded, gave shooting demonstrations, and presented speeches about the power and numbers of people under the command of Thomas Jefferson. Flags, ornate semi-military coats known in the fur trade as "chief's coats," and other gifts were given to the tribes.

Jefferson was now their "Great Father," the Indian leaders were told. The title of "Great Father" (or *Baailápxisaahkuua*, "a grandfather" in the Crow language) was a term used for the President of the United States. This also was a term of respect and mutual responsibility for many tribes. (Ronda 1984: 18, 32, 56-57; Medicine Horse 1987: 87, 156)

They brought "peace medals" to be given to Indian leaders, in sizes of four, three, and two inches in diameter to reflect status. Each had a picture of Jefferson on one side. On the other side was a pipe crossed with a tomahawk, two hands clasping, and the words "peace and friendship." On 11 May 1806 Lewis wrote that the medals

"with the likeness of Mr. Jefferson have all been disposed of except one of the largest size which we reserve for some great Cheif on the Yellow rock river." (Moulton 1991, Vol. 7: 242)

Each tribe was informed that they were no longer to make agreements or accept political tokens such as flags, medals, and uniforms from any nation other than the United States.

Lewis and Clark wrote that a British trader for the North West Company of Canada came to see them on 29 November 1804 and

"we informed him that we had herd of his intentions of making Chiefs &c. and forbid him to give meadels [medals] or flags to the Indians, he Denied having any Such intention, we agreed that one of our interpreters Should Speak for him on Conditions he did not Say any thing more than what tended to [involved] trade alone -- he gave fair promises &." (Moulton 1987, Vol. 3: 242)

That trader was Francois Larocque. The interpreter was Toussaint Charbonneau. (Thwaites 1904, Vol. 1: 229, note 1)

Larocque wrote of the same conversation that they forbid him to give flags or medals:

"in the name of the United States, saying that the Government, looked upon those things as the sacred emblems of the attachment of the Indians to their country. As I had neither flags nor medals, I ran no risk of disobeying those orders, of which I assured them."
(Larocque 1960: 304 & 1985: 138)

The Expedition was a military one as well as diplomatic, exploratory, and scientific. Jefferson was concerned about "civilizing" the Indians and wanted Indians to know that "If any of them should wish to have some of their young people brought up with us, and taught such arts as may be useful to them, we will receive, instruct, and take care of them..." For political diplomacy, Jefferson (in Jackson 1962: 64) cautioned Lewis and Clark to

"treat them [Indians] in the most friendly and conciliatory manner which their own conduct will admit, allay all jealousies as to the object of your journey; satisfy them of its innocence; make them acquainted with the position, extent, character, peaceable and commercial dispositions of the United States; of our wish to be neighbourly, friendly, and useful to them..."

He urged them to invite leaders to visit him:

"If a few of their influential chiefs, within practicable distance, wish to visit us, arrange such a visit with them, and furnish them with authority to call on our officers on their entering the United States, to have them conveyed to this place [Washington, D.C.] at the public expense."

Lewis and Clark wanted the chiefs to travel with them to Washington to view American population and resources, "become convinced themselves, and on their return convince their nations of the futility of an attempt to oppose the will of our government," as Clark wrote, for he believed

"the Surest garentee of Savage fidelity to any nation is a thorough conviction on their minds that their government possesses the power of punishing promptly every aggression committed on their part against the person or property of their citizens; to produce this conviction without the use of violence, is the wish of our government." (Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 212)

Those words were written in his journal on 23 July 1806, when he was at a camp making canoes on the Yellowstone near present Park City. His reference was to a letter written to Missouri River trader Hugh Heney, asking him to communicate those sentiments to the Sioux. The same words also were in a copy of the letter, dated 20 July, written in "Clark's hand and is signed by him." The original apparently was sent with Sergeant Pryor, and subsequently lost. (Jackson 1962: 313; Clark to Heney, July 20, 1806, in Jackson 1962: 309-313)

Historian Donald Jackson says: "I assume that the original was signed by both Lewis and Clark," based on a statement by Lewis on 1 July, two days before he and Clark parted at Travelers' Rest, in which Lewis refers to "a letter to Mr. Heney whom we wish to engage to (procure) prevail on the Sioux chiefs..." (Jackson 1962: 313; Lewis in Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 74).

Anticipating a meeting with the Crow Tribe, Clark prepared a speech for delivery to them. (Clark in Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 213-215; Mussulman 2005) Ernest Osgood (1968: 26) believes that "it was undoubtedly composed by Lewis at Travellers' Rest. The form of expression and its prolixity [flowery but precise wordiness] are characteristically his." (Osgood 1968: 26) The letter is in Clark's handwriting, with his signature, so he at least copied it while in the canoe camp, however, and he may have composed it while he was in camp between 19 and 24 July. [NOTE #2]

Most likely, the letter is modeled after speeches Lewis and Clark discussed, for the message of the words is essentially the same as that presented to all the tribes they contacted during their long journey up the Missouri, across the Rocky Mountains, and down the Columbia, then back again.

The speech expressed both political and economic concerns of President Thomas Jefferson. Politically, it was frankly paternalistic. In part it read:

"Children. I take you all by the hand as the children of your Great father the President of the U. States of America who is the great chief of all the white people towards the rising sun."

"Children. Your Great father the Chief of all the white people has derected me to inform his red children to be at peace with each other, and the white people who may come into your country under the protection of the Flag of your great father ... Those people who may visit you ... are good people and will do you no harm."

"Children. If any one two or 3 of your great chiefs wishes to visit your great father and will go with me, he will send you back next Summer loaded with presents and some goods for the nation."

Clark's other concern was economic, especially to establish a fur trade connection with the Crow. Jefferson had given instructions "to confer with [Indians] on the points most convenient as mutual emporiums, and the articles of most desirable interchange for them and us." (Jefferson in Jackson 1962: 64) So the prepared speech stated:

"Children. The object of my comeing to see you is not to do you injurey but to do you good [.] the Great Chief of all the white people who has more goods at his command than could be piled up in the circle of your camp, wishing that all his read children should be happy has sent me here to know your wants that he may supply them."

"Children. Your great father the Chief of the white people intends to build a house and fill it with such things as you may want and exchange with you for your skins & furs at a very low price. & has derected me [to] inquire of you, at what place would be most convenient for to build this house."

Lewis and Clark met about fifty tribes during their Expedition, including Sioux, Arikara, Mandan, Hidatsa, Cheyenne, Assiniboine, Shoshone, Nez Perce, Flathead (Salish), and Clatsop. Nearly twenty years later, in 1825, several of the tribes, including some of the Crow, would sign Friendship Treaties with U.S. Government representatives sent up the Missouri River by Clark.



Evening of Ceremony with the Teton Sioux – September 26, 1804
by Charles Fritz



Symbol of Horses
by William Big Day

THE VALUE OF HORSES IN CROW CULTURE

Plains Indians have a great affinity for horses. The Crow people were especially renowned for their wealth of horses as well as their ability to manage the animals. The many names for horses among the various tribes are well known: big dog, spirit dog, spirit elk. Robert Lowie (1960: 262) gives the Crow word for horse as *isá.gye*, which he translates as "big dog." Randolph Graczyk explains that the word *isá.gye* is a misspelling of *isaashké* and means "his/her dog" rather than "big dog" and it is the word in common use, and that

"if you want to talk about a horse belonging to a particular individual, his or her horse, you use *isaashké*. It is clearly derived from the possessed term for dog: *isaa-wishké* (*isaá* 'his or her' + *(wi)shké* 'dog')." (Graczyk 2005 and 2006)

The current Crow word for elk is *iichíilikaashe*, usually translated as "real horse." The common Crow word today for "horse" is *iichíile*, sometimes written simplistically as *Ichilay*. *lichíile* may have been the original Crow word for elk and then also used for horse when the Crow acquired them. Eventually the elk was renamed *iichíilikaashe*, perhaps reflecting the concept of the "original horse." These names all reflect the symbolic connection between dogs, elk, and horses. Several types of horses are distinguished, such as wild horse, tame or gentle horse, child's horse, horse offspring or colt, race horse, and parade horse. (Graczyk 2005; Medicine Crow 1992: 101-102; Medicine Horse 1987: 3, 111; Lawrence 1985: 3-5)

In 1805 fur trader Francois Larocque noted that the Crow were "very fond of their horses and take good care of them." He says "every body rides, men, women, & children. The female ride astride as the men do. A child that is too young to keep [in] his saddle is tied to it ... [he] ... gallops or trots the whole day if occasion requires... They are excellent riders." (Larocque 1910: 64 & 1985: 213)

When Wilson Price Hunt was leading fur trappers overland to Astoria in late August and early September 1811 they met a group of Crow in the Big Horn Mountains, and he wrote:

"They were all on horseback. Even the children do not go afoot. These Indians are such good horsemen that they climb and descend the mountains and rocks as though they were galloping in a riding school.... It was really unbelievable. There was, among others, a child tied to a two-year-old colt. He held the reins in one hand and frequently plied his whip. I inquired his age; they told me that he had seen two winters. He did not talk as yet." (Hunt 1935: 284-285)

Chief Arapooash (Eelapúash) (Sore Belly) once asked "What is a country without horses?" (Irving 1961: 164) Years later, the Crow leader Plenty Coups told his biographer, Frank Linderman:

"My horse fights with me and fasts with me, because if he is to carry me in battle he must know my heart and I must know his or we shall never become brothers.... I have many times seen my horse's soul in his eyes." (Linderman 1930: 100)

Larocque also reported that the value of a horse is such that "no price will induce a man to part with a favorite horse on whom he places confidence for security either in attack or flight." (Larocque 1910: 64-65 & 1985: 213)

Crow elder, anthropologist, and historian Joe Medicine Crow emphasizes that horses were integral to Crow social and ceremonial life. They were given as gifts to relatives, friends, and visitors, by a suitor to the parents of the woman he wished to marry or his new in-laws, and distributed to sisters and female cousins by a successful raider. Horses also affected the nomadic lifestyle, including camp locations and movements, intertribal warfare, hunting, trade, social roles and status, art, and tribal philosophy. (Medicine Crow 1992: 101-103; Lawrence 1985: 5-22)

Through visions and visitations from spirits, some individuals received "horse medicine" with special songs and rituals and "were blessed with the strength, stamina, speed, and agility of the horse." (Medicine Crow 1992: 103) Through this power they were said to be able to heal sickness, cure wounds, prophesy, find and own good horses, cure sick horses, find lost horses, and easily capture horses. Crow personal names reflect the importance of the horse, such as Medicine Horse, Rides a Horse, Spotted Horse, and Wraps His (Horse's) Tail. And capturing of horses during raids was a major activity for Crow warriors. (Medicine Crow 1992: 101-103; Lawrence 1985: 17-20)

Trade in horses and mules from the Spanish southwest came along a route from the Shoshone, Flathead (Salish), and Nez Perce tribes west of the Rockies and then to the Crow. The Crow traded horses at the Shoshone rendezvous in today's southwest Wyoming. When the Crow visited the Mandan and Hidatsa villages in the summer of 1805, they brought many items, including two hundred and fifty horses. (Clark in Moulton 1987, Vol. 3: 428; McKenzie 1985: 245-246; Larocque 1985: 219-220; Ewers 1968: 25)

Geographical features in Crow country sometimes are connected with horses. There are a number of streams which refer to horses. These include *lichíinnaakalahshee*, where many colts died, for Sarpy Creek, and *lichíilaashe*, "horse river," for the streams named Pryor Creek and Jefferson River by Lewis and Clark.

ORIGINS OF THE HORSE AMONG THE CROW

The Crow scout Little Face told Lt. James Bradley that a spirit horse lives under the water of the Yellowstone River somewhere below the Big Horn, and occasionally surfaces. He is "of a blue-earth (say a mouse) color, with black stripes running around his legs and body like the stripes of a zebra. He has also a black nose." (Bradley 1923: 297-298) In fact, Little Face "promised to show me the place when we reached it and said if we did not see the horse he could point out his tracks and manure under the water." (Bradley 1917: 220)

The Crow acquired horses about 1730. According to early anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan, who visited the Crow in 1862, they were first obtained from the Comanche of Texas. (Morgan 1959: 197) Joe Medicine Crow says that two legends about the origin of the horse involve raids about 1725 to 1730. One is that a Crow war party purchased or stole a stallion from another tribe on the Green River and brought it to a camp on Wind River in present Wyoming. Another is that a war party brought back several horses from the vicinity of the Great Salt Lake in present Utah. (Medicine Crow 1992: 100-101)

Contemporary Crow elder Barney Old Coyote says that in one of the legendary stories:

"the horse was in the water and came out of the water. It came because of a mysterious woman who came to a war party and then said, 'You are practically my husband. I give you this gift.' So he took the horse and then from then on that horse said take me back there. So he took him back, and they found a mare there on the shores of Lake DeSmet [between present Buffalo and Sheridan, Wyoming]. And then from that, they [the horse herds] started growing." (Old Coyote 2002: 13)

Crow oral tradition thus attests to the importance of the horse, including their spiritual significance.

Lt. Bradley also provides another account from one of his Crow scouts in 1876:

"Little Face says that in the time of his grandfather the Crows had no horses and did not know what they were except through vague tradition almost lost from the tribe... At last, after they had reached the Yellowstone country in the course of their migration from the southeast, they were visited by a party of Nez Percés, who saw that they used only dogs and told them of the larger and better animals possessed by themselves and offered to trade them some if they would visit their camp. A party of Crows did so, and there for the

first time they beheld the larger and more powerful beasts of burden described in this tradition as having first appeared to them out of the water far to the southeast. They purchased a few and set out with them upon their return." (Bradley 1923: 298)

Little Face's grandfather participated in that event, and something more remarkable also occurred on the way, when he "had a strange and fortunate experience":

"As he stood near the bank of a stream, a man clothed in black from head to foot, rose suddenly out of the water and stood before him. He demanded of the Crow what he was doing in that place and was answered that he was after horses. Thereupon the strange creature gave a loud call and from the woods nearby pranced a hundred horses of all colors and mostly fine animals. 'Take your choice of the lot,' said he. Whereupon the Crow selected a handsome animal of coal-black color." (Bradley 1923: 298)

So, Bradley concludes, he rode back to camp with one hundred "large and splendid animals" that would "take the place of dogs as beasts of burden" and "bear the Crows upon their backs in all their future travels." (Bradley 1923: 299) [NOTE #3]

By 1805, Francois Larocque observed of the Crow: "He is reckoned a poor man that has not 10 horses in the spring before the trade at the Missouri takes place and many have 30 or 40." (Larocque 1910: 64 & 1985: 213). The German scientist and tourist Prince Maximilian reported in 1833 that the Crow "possess between 9,000 and 10,000 horses, some of which are very fine," and that they "are said to possess more horses than any other tribe of the Missouri." (Maximilian 1905, Vol 22: 351-352)

U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs agent Alfred J. Vaughan estimated that the Crow owned an average of 20 horses per lodge in 1853. (Vaughan 1853: 355.) And about 1855 Edwin Denig, stated:

"The Crows are perhaps the richest nation in horses of any residing east of the Rocky Mountains. It is not uncommon for a single family to be the owner of 100 of these animals. Most middle-aged men have from 30 to 60. An individual is said to be poor when he does not possess at least 20." (Denig 1961: 144-145)

Denig was the head trader at Fort Union, located at the confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers and the largest fur trade post in the region. The Crow often visited the fort to trade. The reports of Larocque, Maximilian, Vaughan, and Denig show that for at least a half century, around a Crow village, there were more than twice as many horses as people. [NOTE #4]

PLAINS INDIANS CAPTURING HORSES

Among all the tribes, capturing horses was a way of showing bravery and skill. Daring, strategy, risk, and excitement characterized the horse raid. To become a chieftain (*bacheeítche*), a good, valiant man eligible for leadership, the Crow required four "standard deeds of valor," "difficult war deeds" (*ashka'pe* and *alaxchi'ia*), commonly called coups. The deeds were: be the first in a war party to touch an enemy, capture a weapon from an enemy in hand-to-hand combat, capture a horse from within an enemy camp, and lead a successful war party (one in which all come home safely) (Medicine Crow 1992: 6; 45, 102; Lawrence 1985: 14-15, 21-23; Lowie 1935: 5, 216; Medicine Horse 1987: 20, 88, 156; Graczyk 2006)

In his description of Crow military life, Joe Medicine Crow writes:

"Before the reader jumps to conclusions, let him first see the Indian's concept of war. To the Crow, war was not for conquest; it was not for imperialism. No tribal regiment was kept for military aggression. War was a game of wits, of chivalry, and of honor between tribes. The fact is, it could hardly be called 'war,' in the sense in which we think of war today. It was only a dangerous game!" (Medicine Crow 1939: 63)

And, as contemporary Crow elder Heywood Big Day adds, "may the best man win."

Of the coups, to capture horses from under the nose of a foe, especially to go into an enemy camp at night, was the bravest act of all. To take horses twice from the same opponent or camp within a few days was especially daring, and "a Crow rated higher for cutting loose one picketed horse than for lifting a dozen freely roaming about." (Lowie 1935: 228)

According to the Catholic Jesuit Father Pierre-Jean DeSmet, who worked with the Apsáalooke,

"The Crows are considered the most indefatigable marauders of the plains... From their childhood they are practiced in this kind of larceny; they acquire an astonishing ability in it; their glory increases with the number of their captures, so that an accomplished robber is in their eyes a hero." (De Smet 1905, Vol. 1: 238)

Likewise, in his book on the Astorian fur traders, Washington Irving writes specifically of the Crow that horses

"are the especial objects of their depredations, and their skill and audacity in stealing them are said to be astonishing. This is their glory and delight; an accomplished horse stealer fills up their idea of a hero. Many horses are obtained by them, also, in barter from tribes in and beyond the mountains. They have an absolute passion for this noble animal, beside which he is with them an important object of traffic [trade]." (Irving 1982: 160)

In September 1812, fur trapper Robert Stuart was leading six men in one of the Pacific Fur Company groups returning from Astoria to St. Louis when some Crow captured all of the horses from the group near present Alpine, on the Montana-Idaho border. He describes their method:

"one of the party rode past our camp and placed himself on a conspicuous knob, in the direction they wanted to run them off; when the others (who were hidden behind our camp), seeing him prepared, rose the warwhoop, or yell (which is the most horribly discordant howling imaginable, being in imitation of the different beasts of prey); at this diabolical noise, the animals naturally rose their heads to see what the matter was – at that instant he who had planted himself in advance put spurs to his steed, and ours, seeing him gallop off in apparent fright, started all in the same direction, as if a legion of infernals were in pursuit of them. – In this manner a dozen or two of these fellows have sometimes succeeded in running off every horse belonging to our parties, of perhaps 5 or 600 men; for once those creatures take fright, nothing short of broken necks, can stop their progress." (Stuart 1953: 102)

That was a spectacularly dramatic event. Frequently, however, horses were captured by quiet stealth.

The Crow, too, knew they had to be vigilant. Edwin Denig wrote:

"The Crow Indians take good care of their horses, as much at least as is practicable in their roving manner of life, and more than any other tribe in the North West territory except the Gros Ventres.... These people live in the hourly expectation of losing all their horses, which is their only wealth, to the warriors of the surrounding nations, particularly the Sioux and Blackfeet." (Denig 1961: 145)

A song by the Lakota Sioux warrior Two Shields and recorded by ethnomusicologist Frances Densmore (1918: 337) advised:

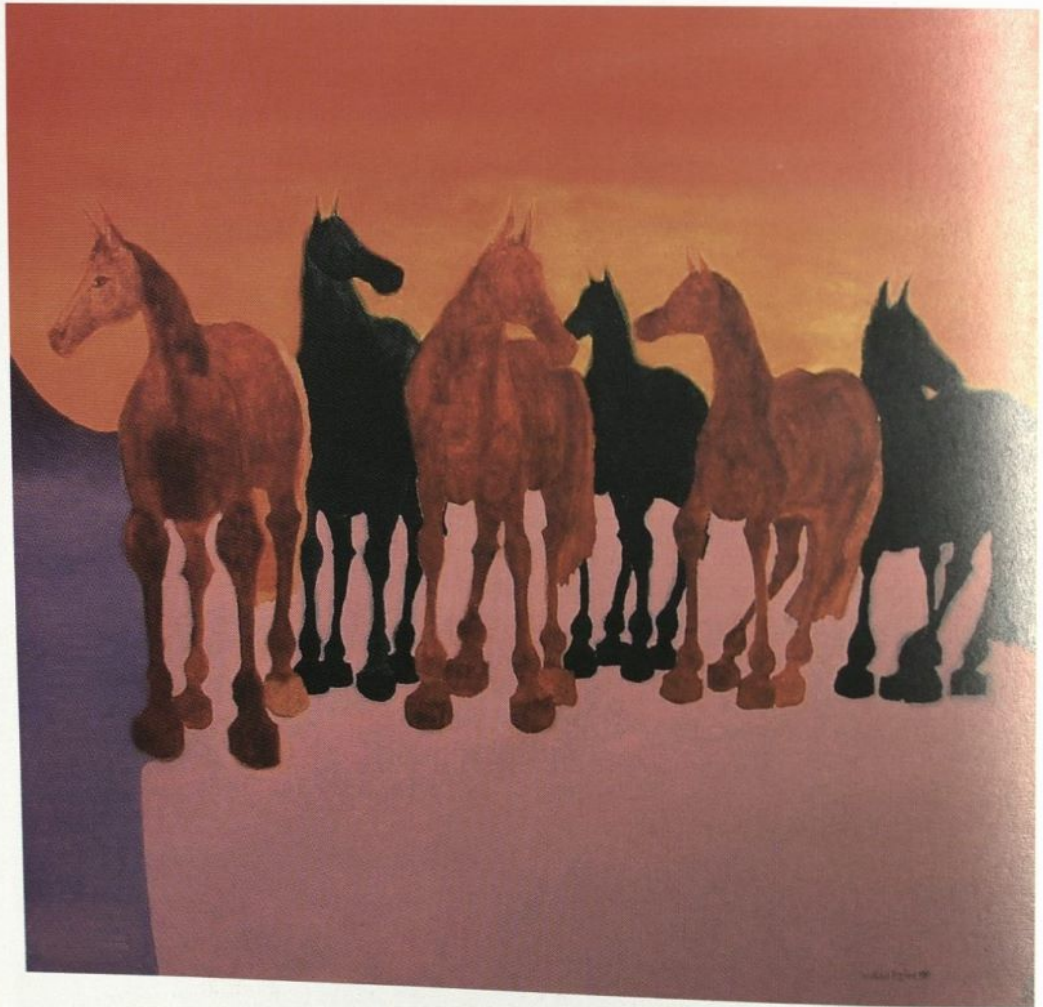
“Crow Indian
you must watch your horses
a horse thief
often
am I”

Young boys, with the guidance of older men, often were assigned to guard the horse herds at night. Indeed, a treasured horse often would be picketed at night to the door of a tipi or even by a strap running underneath the tipi to the wrist of its sleeping owner, making the taking of it that much more difficult.

The horse-raid complex among the Plains tribes has been documented extensively. Trade and sales also took place among tribes, as when the Crow took 250 horses to the Hidatsa villages in the summer of 1805. And there are many instances when both Indian tribes and non-Indians were involved in the exchange of horses through capture, trade, and sales. Lewis and Clark were involved in such activities.



The Raiders
by J. K. Ralston
(courtesy of Mrs. Don C. Foote)



Home on the Range
by William Big Day

LEWIS AND CLARK'S WORRIES ABOUT LOSING HORSES

Loss of horses to Indians was both imagined and actual at various times during the Expedition. Lewis and Clark experienced both sides of the horse capturing game. They took possession of horses on the open plains, considering them wild if there were no owners present. As historian Thomas P. Slaughter notes, they "believed that their horses were theirs, as were any horses they caught." (Slaughter 2003: 160)

Clark experienced the effects of a Lakota Sioux horse raid in February 1805. He led a hunting excursion a few miles from Fort Mandan, near present Washburn, about 40 miles north of Bismarck, North Dakota. After a successful hunt they cached some of the meat and brought the rest back to the fort. On 14 February Clark wrote:

"Sent 4 men [George Drouillard, Robert Frazer, Silas Goodrich, and John Newman] with the Horses Shod & 2 Slays [sleighs] down for the meat I had left, 22 miles below those men were rushed on by 106 [Codex C says 105] Sioux who robed them of 2 of their horses-& they returned." (Moulton 1987, Vol. 3: 295, 296)

Based on Drouillard's report, Clark wrote on 15 February 1805:

"about 105 Indians which they took to be Souis rushed on them and Cut their horses from the Slays two of which they carried off in great hast, the 3rd horse was given up by the intersection of an Indian who assumed Some authority on the accasion, probably more thro' fear of himself or some of the Indians being killed by our men..." (Moulton 1987, Vol. 3: 296)

The next day, Clark reported that Capt. Lewis and five men, four of them Mandan, went in pursuit of the Sioux and found "a number of pars of Mockersons which, the Mandans knew to be Souix mockersons." (Moulton 1987, Vol. 3: 297) Then a week later, on 21 February 1805, Clark wrote:

"Capt. Lewis returned with 2 Slays loaded with meat, after finding that [they] he could not overtake the Souis war party, (who had in their way destroyed all the meat at one Deposit which I had made & Burnt the Lodges) determined to proceed on to the lower Deposit, which he found had not been observed by Soux." (Moulton 1987, Vol. 3: 299)

Thomas Slaughter (2003: 168) cautions that the precise estimate of 105 or 106 Lakotas made by the four men under attack probably was exaggerated and is not believable, especially because it would have been difficult to count in the midst of the action-filled attack and only two of the Expedition's horses were taken.

The following year, in May and June 1806, Lewis and Clark recovered horses which they had left the previous fall in the care of Nez Perce (Ni mii puu; Chopunnish) in the region east of present Lewiston, Idaho. Clark separated from Lewis at Travelers' Rest on 3 July. Then he traveled into the territory where he and Lewis had met the Lemhi band of Shoshone led by Cammeahwait (the brother of Sacagawea) in August 1805.

On 5 and 6 July 1806, when he was in the vicinity of the Big Hole River near the present towns of Sula and Dillon, Montana, Clark saw signs of Indians, including tracks of two horses, a fire, and gathering of quawmash (camas root). On 6 July Clark wrote that "we Collected our horses which were much scattered which detained us..." The next day he wrote "This morning our horses were very much Scattered; I sent out men in every direction in Serch of them." They found all but nine of them. The men went "in every direction 6 or 8 miles around Camp and could not See any Signs of them..." (Clark in Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 165-169) His men informed him

"that they had reasons to believe that the Indians had Stolen them in the course of the night, and founded their reasons on the quality of the horses... I thought it probable that they might be stolen by Some Skulking Shoshones..." (Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 169)

On 7 July, Clark thought that it was possible that the horses rambled and had men continue to search for them. He decided to have the horses hobbled and directed that a man check on them after the moon rose. On 9 July "Sergeant Ordway and party arrived with the horses we had lost. he reported that he found those horses near the head of the Creek on which we encamped" three days earlier. (Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 169, 170, 174)

Again on 16 July Clark wrote: "our horses having rambled to a long distance down the river detained us much later than Common," (Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 189) and he later mentioned another difficulty with the horses in addition to rambling:

"in passing every gangue of buffalo... the loos horses as Soon as they saw the Buffalow would immediately pursue them and run around them... This disposition in the horses is no doubt owing to their being frequently exercised in chasing different animals by their former owners the Indians as it is their Custom to chase every Speces of wild animal with horses, for which purpose they train all their horses." (Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 218-219).

The truth is that horses Lewis and Clark used during the Expedition often wandered or ran. And sometimes they were captured by Indians.

BLACKFEET ATTEMPT TO CAPTURE HORSES FROM LEWIS

After separating from Clark at Travelers' Rest, Meriwether Lewis had his own worries about horse stealing. On the morning of 12 July, seven (of 17) of his horses were missing. George Drouillard was sent to search for them and returned on the 15th without them. He believed Tushepaws (Salish/Flathead) had stolen them (Lewis in Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 107, 109; Wheeler 1904: 295-296).

Then on 26 July Lewis and his men encountered a group of Blackfeet, mostly young men, on Two Medicine River, a tributary of the Marias in northwestern Montana not far from present Cut Bank. In his journal, Lewis reported what happened during his encounter with them. Almost one hundred years later, George Bird Grinnell interviewed Wolf Calf, one of the Blackfeet who had been the youngest person of that group. (Lewis in Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 128-137; Cutright 1968; Ewers 1958: 47-49; Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 128-136; Wheeler 1904: 302-313; Coues 1893: 1098-1105) [NOTE #5]

The eight Indians were herding about thirty horses, which Lewis thought had been captured from another tribe. There is a possibility, as Elliott Coues speculated, that they might have been a hunting party with "spare ponies to exchange for those already ridden when about to run buffalo." (Coues 1893: 1098) Whatever the case, he was apprehensive, as he wrote "this was a very unpleasant sight." (Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 128) Eleven days earlier, on 17 July, he had written that both the Blackfeet and Minnetarees of Fort de Prairie "are a vicious lawless and reather an abandoned set of wretches[.] I wish to avoid an interview with them if possible." (Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 113)

Nevertheless, when he encountered them on 26 July he wrote "I resolved to make the best of our situation and to approach them in a friendly manner." He told his men that he believed "we were to have some difficulty with them [and] I was convinced they would attempt to rob us." He would "resist to the last extremity preferring death to that of being deprived of my papers instruments and gun." (Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 128, 129)

Wary and nervous, but peaceful, both groups communicated by sign talk. Lewis gave one leader a peace medal, and a flag and handkerchief to two others. They camped together that night and smoked the pipe several times. Through signs, Lewis told them some things about American politics and trade similar to the message in Clark's speech for the Crow and what they told all tribes. He invited them to go downriver with him to a council meeting, and

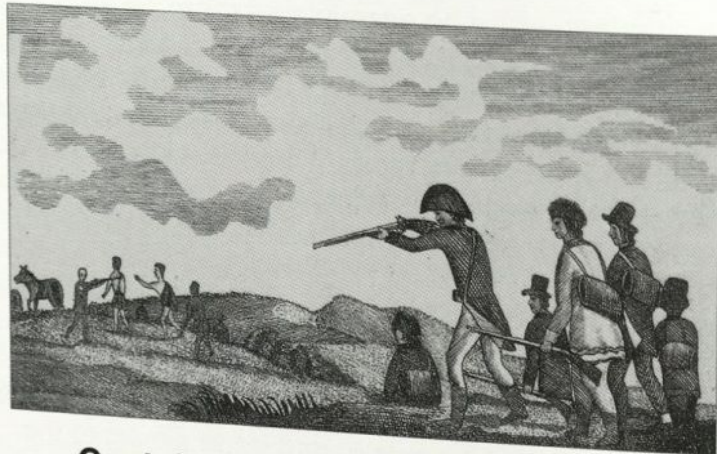
said he would give them ten horses and tobacco. They indicated a willingness to trade with the Americans, but did not respond to the offer to travel together. (Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 130-132)

The Blackfeet reported that there was a Canadian trader in their village on the Marias, about 40 miles to the north. Lewis worried about this, and part of his message was that the Americans were going to trade supplies and guns to all the tribes, including the Nez Perce, Shoshone, and Kootenai, their traditional enemies. As James Ronda says, "Lewis unwittingly dropped a geo-political bombshell." (Ronda 1984: 241) It disturbed the Indians, and at that point if not before, the warriors planned to rob Lewis' men.

Early the next morning, the Blackfeet tried to quietly take their guns and horses. When Lewis and his men woke up, there was a fast and heated exchange. Reuben Field stabbed Side Hill Calf and Lewis shot another young warrior. Lewis then left a medal on the neck of the man who had been stabbed, "that they might be informed who we were." (Lewis in Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 135).

While the other Indians hurried away, Lewis and his men worried that they would bring reinforcements from their village, so he and his men traveled rapidly down the Marias. Ironically, according to Elliott Coues they "were rather gainers by this contest," taking four of the Indian horses and losing only one theirs (Coues 1893: 1104), or as Lewis stated: "My Indian horse carried me very well in short much better than my own would have done and leaves me with but little reason to complain of the robbery." (Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 136)

Although they generally have the reputation of good relations with most Indians, Lewis and Clark had experienced tensions before, most notably with the Teton Sioux on the Missouri River. This event in Blackfeet country was important, however, because it was the only time Indians were killed by members of the Expedition.



Captain Lewis Shooting an Indian
(from the journal of Patrick Gass)

HORSES CAPTURED FROM CLARK

When Clark crossed into the Yellowstone Valley he had 49 horses and a colt. (Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 179) As he traveled down the Yellowstone River he hoped to meet with members of the Apsáalooke tribe and watched for signs of them. On 18 July he noted in his journal:

"at 11 A.M., I observed a Smoke rise to the S.S.E. in the plains toward the termination of the rocky mountains in that direction (which is Covered with Snow) [.] this smoke must be raised by the Crow Indians in that direction, as a Signal for us, or other bands. I think it most probable that they have discovered our trail and taking us to be Shoshones &c. in search of them the Crow Indians (W.C.: now at peace with them) to trade as is their Custom have made this Smoke to show where they are -- or otherwise taking us to be their Enemy made this Signal for other bands to be on their guard." (Clark in Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 201) [NOTE #6]

The next day, on 19 July, Clark's group camped near today's Park City. The cottonwood trees there were large enough to make dugout canoes.

It took several days to make two canoes, each 28 feet long, 24 inches wide, and 18 inches deep, which were then lashed together for stability. Among other activities, they also made oars, sharpened axes and put new handles on them, hunted and dried meat, cooked, dressed skins to make clothes, and rested themselves and their horses. From 19 to 24 July they stayed at this "canoe camp," called Camp Cottonwood by fur trade historian Elliott Coues. (Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 205-217; Wheeler 1904: 342).

The first day of camp, Charbonneau reported seeing a lone Indian across the river, as Clark said "Shabono informed me that he saw an Indian on the high lands on the opposite side of the river, in the time I was absent in the woods." (Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 206) If he identified the tribal affiliation, it is not recorded. Clark again saw smoke in the mountains, in the same direction he had seen earlier.

On the morning of 21 July, three days after he first saw smoke signals, Clark wrote that he

"was informed that Half of our horses were absent... I am apprehensive that the indians have Stolen our horses, and probably those who had made the Smoke a few days passed towards the S.W. [S.E.]" (Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 209-210)

As usual, Clark worried about Indian theft. On 22 July and the next day, several men looked for the horses, but could not find them. Clark wrote on 22 July:

"I begin to suspect that they are taken by the Indians, and taken over the hard plains to prevent our following them. My suspicion is grounded on the improbability of the horses' leaving the grass and rushes of the river bottoms, of which they are very fond, and taking immediately out into the open dry plains, where the grass is but short and dry. If they had continued in the bottoms, either up or down, their tracks could be followed very well." (Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 211)

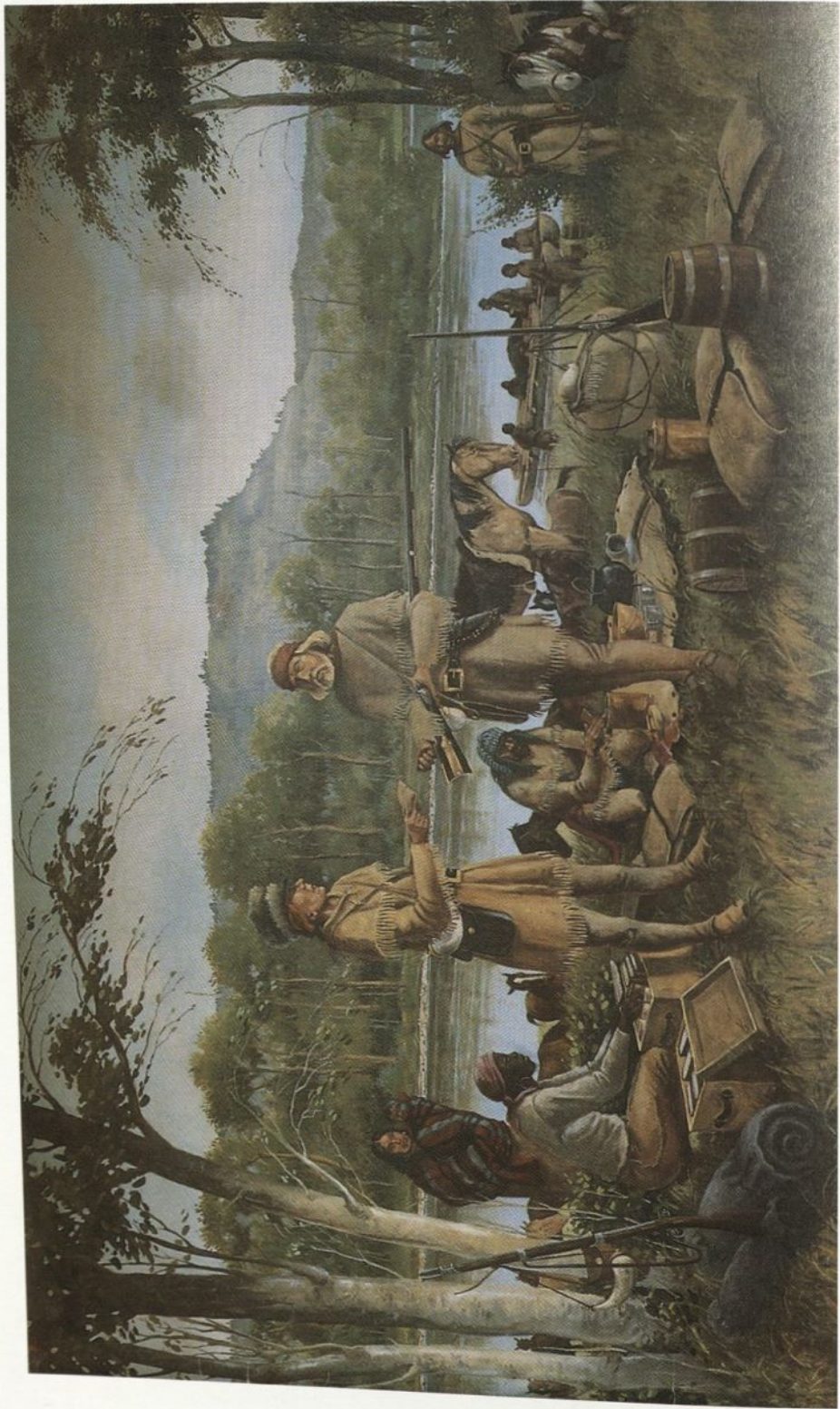
There was more suspicion of Indian presence that night, and Clark reported on the 23rd:

"Labiche went out early, agreeable to my directions of last evening. Sergeant Pryor and Windsor also went out... Sgt pryor found an Indian Mockerson and a Small piece of a roab, the mockerson worn out on the bottom & yet wet, and have every appearance of haveing been worn but a few hours before. those Indian Signs is Conclusive with me that they have taken the 24 horses which we lost on the night of the 20th instant, and that those who were about last night were in Serch of the ballance of our horses ... Labiche returned, having taken a great circle, and informed me that he saw the tracks of the horses making off into the open plains and were, by the tracks, going very fast. The Indians who took the horses bent their course rather down the river." (Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 211)

Anthropologist Robert Lowie writes that Crow horse raiders usually started on foot, "hence the need for plenty of footgear. 'I had moccasins made for myself' is a formula that denotes preparation for a war party." (Lowie 1935: 220)



The Crossing
by J. K. Ralston
(courtesy of Gareld Krieg and the Western Heritage Center, Billings)



Take the Horses to the Mandans
by Robert F. Morgan

PRYOR LOSES THE REST OF THE HORSES

At that point Clark felt that Indians were still in search of horses, so he wrote that he "determined to have the ballance of the horses guarded and for that purpose sent out three men." He assigned Sergeant Nathaniel Pryor (with George Shannon and Richard Windsor) to guard the horses. (Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 210)

Clark also directed Sergeant Pryor to take the remaining horses to the Big Horn River. Clark was to meet him there with the canoes and put him across the Yellowstone, from the north side to the south. Instead, the next day, on 24 July, they arrived about the same time a mile or two below Horse Creek, present Blue Creek south of Billings. Clark states: "I had the horses driven across the river, and set Sergeant Pryor and his party across." (Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 219, 222) The group now also included George Hall, who preferred to go overland because he could not swim.

Sergeant Pryor and his men then were ordered to take the horses to the Mandan villages, as Clark wrote

"I gave Sergt Pryor his instructions... [to] take the remaining horses to the Mandans, where he is to enquire for Mr. H. Heney... Sergt. Pryor is directed to leave the balance of the horses with the grand Chief of the Mandans until our arrival at his village." (Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 212)

Clark wanted to trade the horses and the skins of animals at the fur trade establishments on the Assiniboine River for tobacco, knives, flints, coffee, sugar, and other necessities, and for corn and beans at the Mandan villages. They have been called Clark's "credit card." (Clark in Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 285; Clark to Pryor, in Jackson 1962: 313-314; Mussulman and Furtwangler 2004)

Clark's party continued downriver in the canoes. Pryor's group headed overland to the east. On the evening of 25 July, they halted to let the horses graze "on the banks of a large creek, which contained no running water," probably Fly Creek, known to the Crow as *Baáhpuaataashe*, Fly River. (Medicine Horse 1987: 8, 115; Moulton 1983, Vol. 1: Atlas maps 108, 116, 117).

A heavy rain shower raised the creek so high that they decided to wait all night, and took refuge from the rain. In the morning, the horses were gone. There is a handwritten notation on the Clark-Maximilian map Sheet 30 which states "The Crow Indians stole 25 horses from Sergeant Pryor and party on the night of the 25th July 1806." (Moulton 1983, Vol. 1: Atlas map 117) They tried to follow the tracks of the horses, but in vain. Then, traveling on foot, they went northeast to a prominent sandstone formation on the Yellowstone River. At that place they killed one or two buffalo and stretched the hides around cottonwood or willow frames to make two bullboats, or "Canoe in the form and shape of the mandans & Ricaras (the form of a bason)," to float down the Yellowstone. (Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 284)

Pryor and his men would catch up to Clark's canoe party about 12 days later, on 8 August, near present Sanish, North Dakota. On that day Clark wrote:

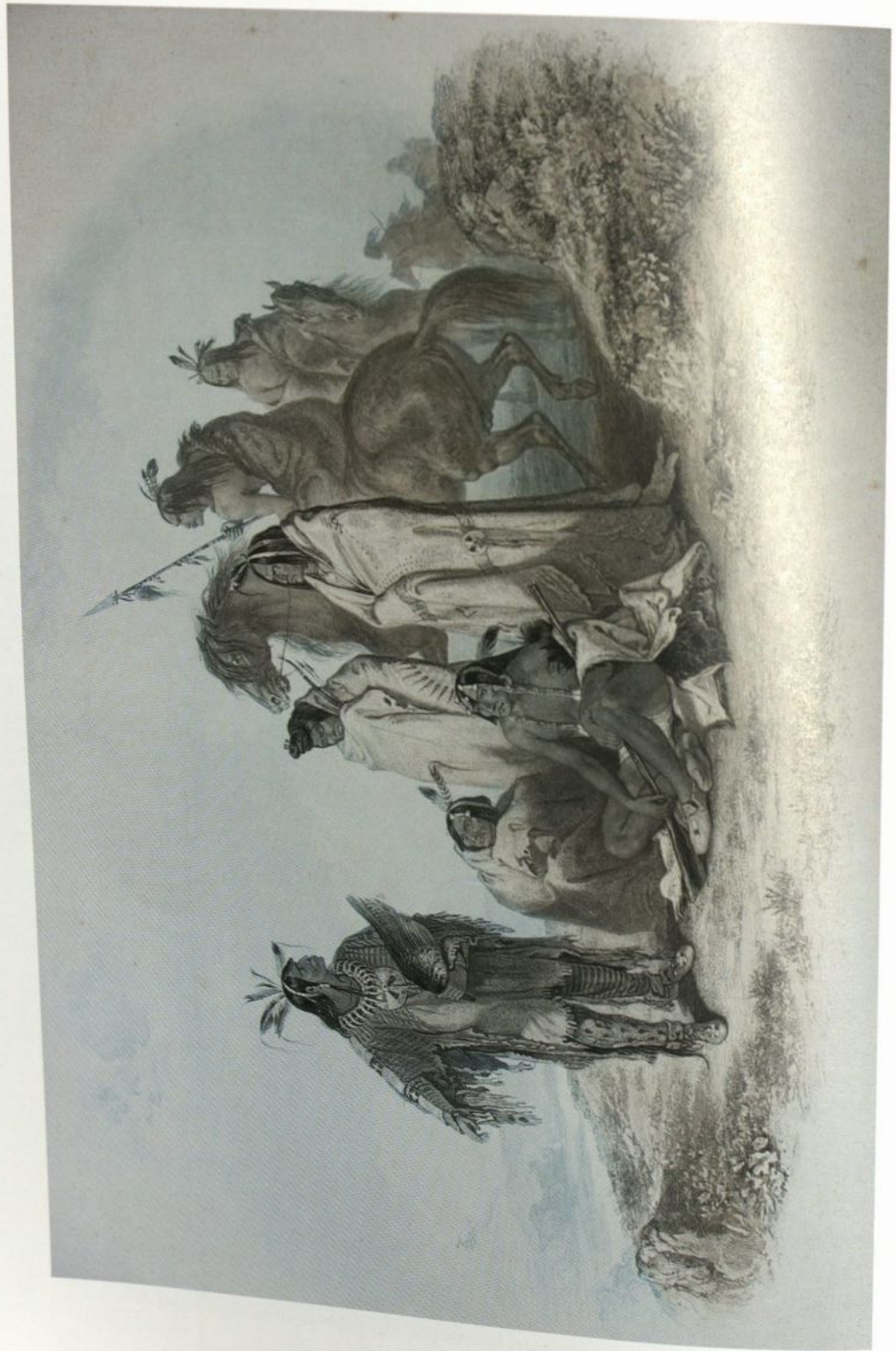
"In lookg about their Camp they discovered Several tracks within 100 paces of their Camp, which they pursued [...] found where they [Indians] had Caught and drove off all the horses. they prosued on five miles [...] the Indians there divided into two parties. they Continued in pursute of the largest party five miles further [...] finding that there was not the Smallest Chance of overtaking them, they returned to their Camp and packed up their baggage on their backs..." (Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 284).

So the second horse incident was reported to him by Pryor. Clark had lost all of the horses he had intended to trade or give away for goods and services at the Indian villages on the Missouri.

Meanwhile, on 25 July, Clark surveyed the same large sandstone formation, now called Pompey's Pillar National Monument. He named "Pompy's Tower" for the nickname he gave to the son of Sacagawea and Charbonneau, Jean Baptiste, and the large brook which runs along it was named River Baptieste. Clark described the surrounding terrain and animals, and noted rock carvings engraved by Indians. Then, following his own practice of marking his name on trees or rocks, and perhaps inspired by the markings already there, he carved his own signature. That came to be the only lasting physical evidence on the land of the Corp's journey of more than two years. (Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 225)
[NOTE #7]



Wolf Scout Camp at Pompey's Pillar, 1806
by Rabbit Knows Gun



Crow Indians Near Fort Clark in 1833
by Karl Bodmer

CLARK'S RESPONSE TO CAPTURE OF HIS HORSES

Clark and his men simply were not sufficiently alert during the time they were in the cottonwood canoe camp. After already losing half of their horses a few days earlier, Sgt. Pryor and his three men should have been more vigilant, even if they sought protection from rain.

Five years later, trader Robert Stuart would admire the "boldness, dash, and strategy" of the Crow despite loss of his own horses, according to fur trade historian Lewis Saum (1965: 118) Stuart writes:

"On the whole this was one of the most daring, and intrepid actions I ever heard of among Indians, and convinces me how determined they were on having our horses, for which they would unquestionably have followed us any distance..." (Stuart 1953: 102)

Clark had a different perspective. As an American frontiersman, he viewed such action not as capturing, but as "stealing." More important, Clark saw himself (and in fact had been appointed along with Lewis) as President Jefferson's official representative of the United States ("the 17 nations"). In the speech that he prepared, but never got to deliver to the Apsáalooke, written about the time of the first raid but before the loss of the rest of the horses, Clark expressed his anger:

"Children. Your Great father will be very sorry to here [hear] of the [blank] stealing the horses of his Chiefs warrors whome he sent out to do good to his red children on the waters of Missoure."

He wanted to advise the Crow:

"Your great father has derected me to tell you not to suffer [allow] your young and thoughtless men to take the horses or property of your neighbours or the white people, but to trade with them fairly and honestly, as those of his red children below [downriver]."

He also understood that capturing horses was a way of communicating:

"Children. I heard from some of your people [blank] nights past by my horses who complained to me of your people having taken 4 [24] of their cummerads [comrades]."

Thomas Slaughter points out that "It was not in the least unusual for people in his [Clark's] culture to talk and listen to their domestic animals." Slaughter continues:

"it is significant that the horses complained to Clark at night rather than in the morning... implying that the communication came to him in a dream. That would bring Clark's story into line with both his own culture's mainstream beliefs about animal communication and with those of the Crow." (Slaughter 2003: 12-13)

He also suggests that the reason Clark left blank the number of nights since the horses had been stolen is that he "intended the speech to reflect the actual evening when the horses communicated with him." (Slaughter 2003: 13) Most likely, Clark was planning to count back from the day he would meet and talk with the Crow to the day they were taken. Beyond daring, the Crow were informing Clark and his men (or any others who were in their territory) that they knew of their presence and that "We Crow are here."



Mih-Tutta-Hang-Kush, A Mandan Village
by Karl Bodmer

DID FRANCOIS LAROCQUE AFFECT CLARK?

Francois Larocque arrived at the Mandan and Hidatsa villages in present North Dakota on 24 November 1804. He had been sent by the North West Company of Canada from his post at Fort Montagne a la Bosse on the Assiniboine River in present Saskatchewan to the villages to continue trade contact with those tribes and extend that trade to the Crow. After several trips between his post and the villages, in June 1805 Larocque waited, stating that he wanted "to smoke a pipe of peace & amity with the Rocky Mountain [Crow] Indians and to accompany them to their lands." What he told them was similar to Lewis and Clark's message to Indians. (Larocque 1910: 16, 23-24 & 1985: 160, 165)

Larocque made friends with Le Borgne (Kokookis, the One Eye), the principal chief of the Hidatsa. Le Borgne had adopted the Crow leader Red Calf (Nakesinia) as a son. According to Randolph Graczyk (2006), Larocque's Nakesinia could be *Da'ake Shi'ile* "Yellow Calf." Le Borgne told Larocque "that he would strongly recommend to him to put the white people in his heart and watch over them," and he personally introduced Larocque to Red Calf and vouched for him. Larocque wrote that Le Borgne told the Crow chief "that I was going with him & to take good care of us & he spoke very much in our favour ..." (Larocque 1910: 20, 22-23 & 1985: 170)

At several meetings with the Crow, usually with Le Borgne and other Hidatsa present, Larocque smoked the pipe with them, both socially and ceremonially. He wrote on one occasion: "I told them many other things which I thought was necessary & closed the Harangue by making them smoke in the Medicin Pipe." (Larocque 1910: 24 & 1985: 171) Trader Charles McKenzie reported:

"Mr. La Rocque's great pipe was handed round as a precious offering and each took a few whiffs; then Mr. La Rocque presented to the Red Calf a flag; a stem [pipe], with some mercantile articles." (McKenzie 1960: 345 & 1985: 245)

Larocque gave gifts to the Crow, and received gifts from them:

"Assembled the Chiefs of the different Bands of the Rocky mountains, and made them a present of axes, knives, ivory combs, vermillion, wampoon [wampum] shells, rings, fire steels and flint, papers Cor'd Glasses, cassetête, awls, B.C. beads, blue beads, cock feathers, balls & powder, and tobacco... They thanked [me] and made a present of 6 Robes, one Tyger [mountain lion] skin, 4 shirts, 2 women Cotillons [shifts or petticoats], 2 dressed Elk skins,

3 saddles and 13 pair leggings. I clothed the Chief of the Ererokas at the same time and gave him a flag and a wampoon [shells of dentalium]" (Larocque 1910: 24 & 1985: 170-171)

The gift exchange was both personal and diplomatic.

Finally, after these introductions, smoking, and gift exchanges, Larocque was adopted by Red Calf. McKenzie writes: "the Chief, to testify his sense of the obligation, adopted Mr. La Rocque as Father and promised to respect and consider him as such for ever after." (Larocque 1985: 170-171; McKenzie 1960: 345-346 & 1985: 245) There are at least three aspects to this adoption.

First, there was a central ritual of adoption and making of relatives in the intertribal trade that even Lewis and Clark comprehended. Clark noted on 14 November 1804 that there was "a Serimony of adoption and interchange of property, between the Ossiniboines, [Christinoes] [N.B.: Knistenaux] and the nations of this neighborhood." (Moulton 1987, Vol. 3: 236)

Second, conceptually "father" is a term and relationship of respect. In the Crow kinship system, a person is a "member" of the *mother's* matrilineal clan. Men in the clan are brothers and women are mothers or sisters, depending on age. A person is considered to be a "child" of the matrilineal clan of the *father's* mother. The men in that clan are fathers, what Americans know as "uncles," and the women are what Americans know as "aunts" or mothers, depending on age. These individuals, known as *áassahke*, give advice, spiritual guidance, prayers, and good wishes for the "children" of their clans. (Old Coyote 1974: 94-100; Frey 1987: 45-46) [NOTE #8]

Third, among the Crow and Hidatsa, there is a custom that one can share, give or buy privileges connected with certain social and religious practices such as visions, war deeds, dances, and pipes. Robert Lowie writes that

"the Crow could indefinitely extend the range of beneficiaries from a vision. In such cases the visionary (or transferror) was conceived to stand to the purchaser in the same ceremonial relationship as the supernatural being to the visionary: as the supernatural adopts the visionary as his 'child' so the owner of a medicine becomes the buyer's 'father.'" (Lowie 1935: 249)

Further, in the case of someone who was not related to a Crow person or family, "The outsider who wished to buy especially valuable medicines was at first treated as an undesirable intruder." (Lowie 1935: 248) Then someone vouched for them, and the transfer or adoption took place.

Through adoption, Larocque was thus linked into both the politics of the trade relationship and a larger extended family and ceremonial connection within the Crow tribe. Larocque was perhaps a "father" because he now stood in a special relationship of respect. He was a sort of brother to Le Borgne, who was Red Calf's adopted father, and he had powerful connections with the "grandfathers" in the white man's trade of the North West Company. The respect and obligation was to reach both ways. Red Calf advised him and "told his new Father how he was to conduct himself in order to keep friends with all and assure a Safe Journey." (McKenzie 1985: 248) Larocque did travel with the Crow, and they got along well.

Larocque visited Lewis and Clark at Fort Mandan seven times between 29 November 1804 and 3 April 1805. He asked permission to join them, as Clark wrote on 30 January 1805: "Mr. La Roche paid us a Visit, & we gave him an answer respecting the request he made when last here of accompanying us on our Journey &c. [Nicholas Biddle: refused]" (Moulton 1987, Vol. 3: 281), or as Biddle put it "this proposal we thought it best to decline." (Coues 1893, Vol. 1: 228) He spent about four days with them and Clark wrote on 2 February, the day Larocque left the fort to return to the Hidatsa villages, that "Mr. Larocke leave us today (this man is a Clerk to the N W Company, & verry anxious to accompany us)." (Moulton 1987, Vol. 3: 284) They refused mostly for political reasons, partly because they did not want a British trader with them on an Expedition designed to confirm American supremacy.

Between 29 June and 14 September 1805, Larocque traveled with the Crow to their territory, going from the Hidatsa villages on the Missouri to the Big Horn Mountains, then north along the Pryor Mountains to the Yellowstone River. When he was in the Hidatsa village he had told them they could decide on a place for him to build a trading post. (Larocque 1910: 24) Before he departed from their village in the vicinity of present Billings, Montana, Larocque arranged a fur trade relationship with the Crow. He taught them how to prepare beaver skins according to the European manner.

He told the chiefs in a council:

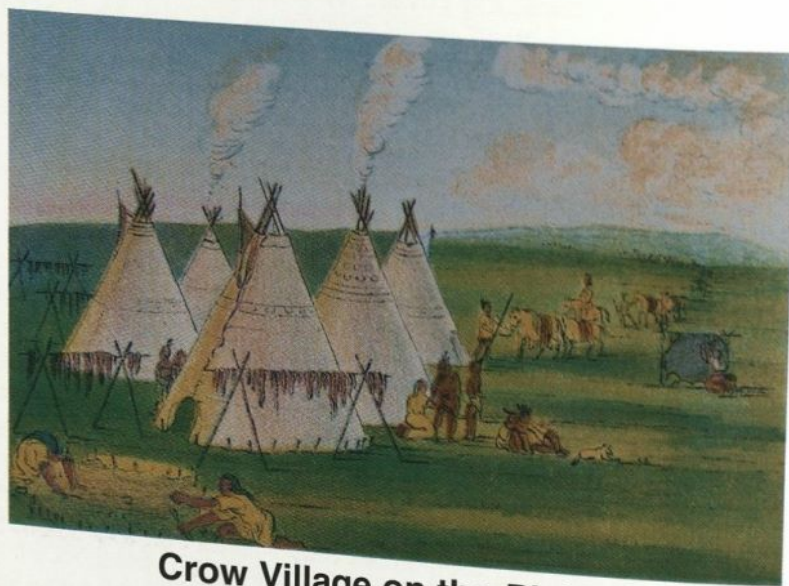
"I desired them to kill Beavers and Bears all winter for that I would come and trade with them and bring them their wants... Upon my arrival at the Island if I do not find them I am to go to the Mountain called Amanchabé Chije & then light 4 diff fires on 4 successive days, and they will Come to us (for it is very high and the fire can been seen at a great distance) in number 4 & not more, if more than four come to us we are to act upon the defensive for it will be other Indians if we light less than 3 fires they will not come to us but think it is enemies." (Larocque 1910: 45 & 1985: 192)

Amanchabé is Larocque's hearing of the Crow word *awaxaawé* or "mountain(s)" and Chije could be *chiiche* or "scout." The area known today as the Pryor Mountains are also known by the Crow as "shot at boulder" or "arrows piercing rock" mountains, *Baáhpúuo Isawaxaawúua*. The Crow know Pryor Creek as *Alúutaashe*, "Arrow River." (Graczyk 2006; Medicine Horse 1987: 8).

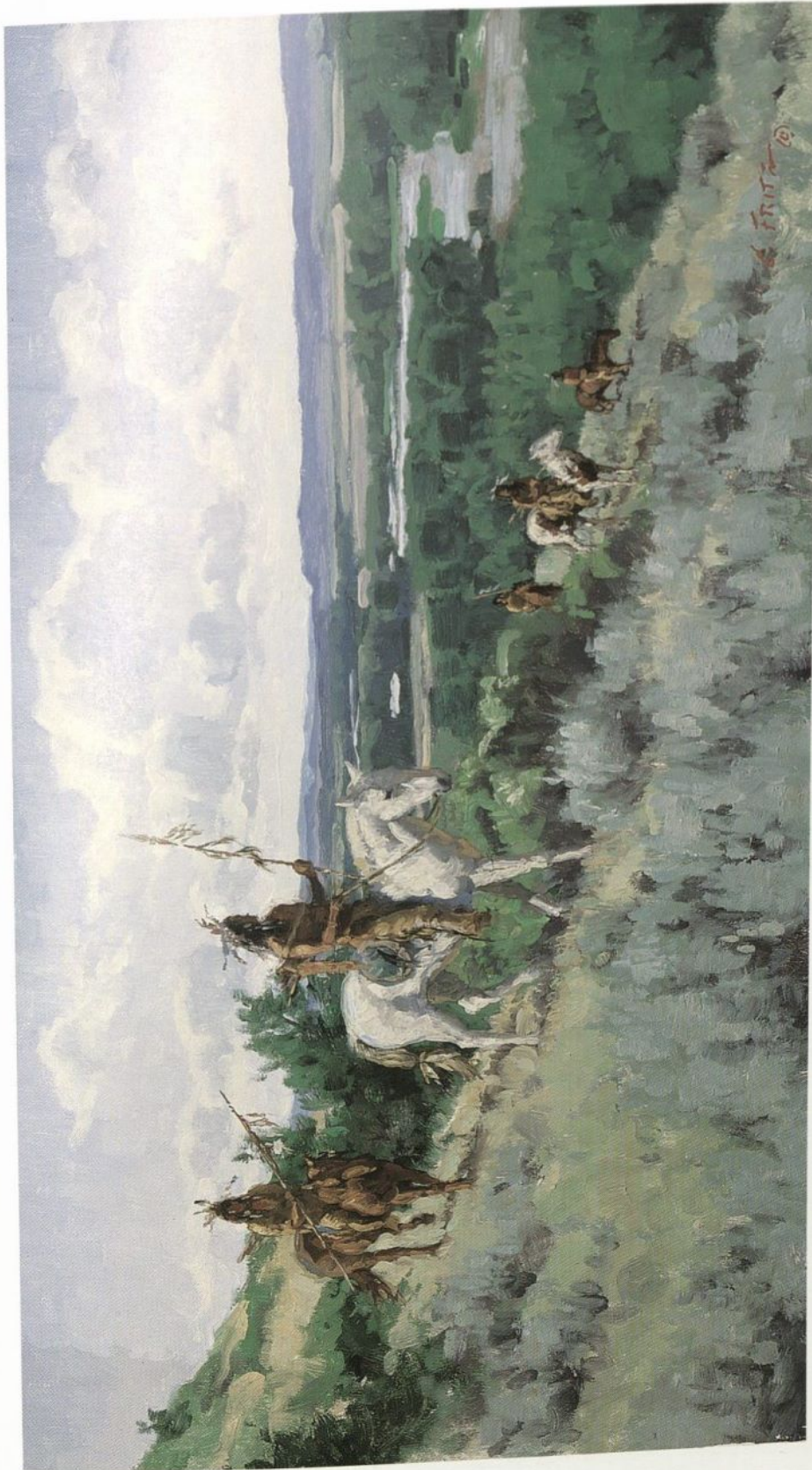
Of course, Larocque had tried to influence the situation to his own advantage by warning them against enemies: anyone other than himself, especially other traders. Then he left the Crow and arrived back at the Hidatsa villages on 9 October. As it turned out, subsequently Larocque was reassigned by the North West Company and he never returned to Crow country.

Ten months later, in July 1806, when William Clark traveled down the Yellowstone he saw the smokes he took to be signals raised by the Crow "to trade ... or, otherwise, taking us to be their enemy, made this signal for other bands to be on their guard." (Moulton 1993, Vol. 8: 200) The smoke might have been signals or simply from camps. Likewise, the fires of Clark's party, made for cooking and warmth, must have produced some smoke. The Crow might at first have thought the smoke from Clark's fires were signals from Larocque, but they were not lit in the manner or place Larocque had prescribed.

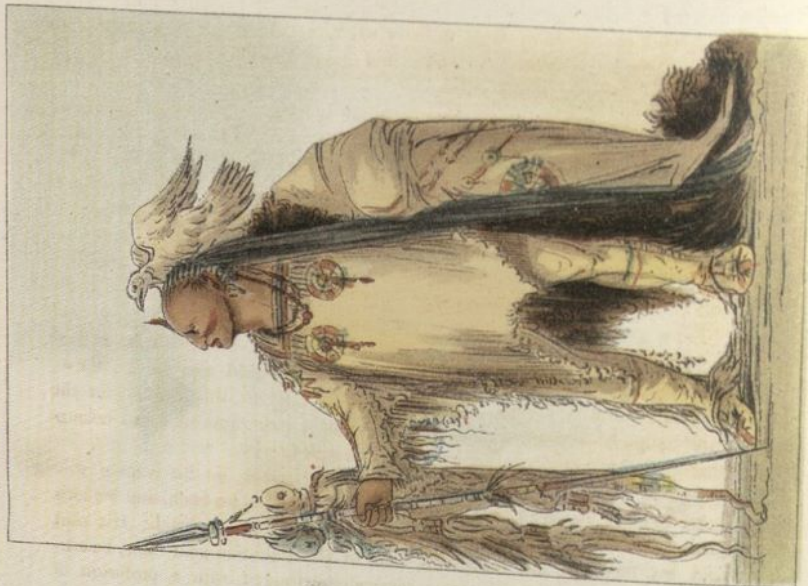
Clark did not send any deliberate signals, and he did not reply to the smoke he thought was a signal, so the Crow may have concluded that he was not Larocque and so avoided direct contact. When they raised the fires Clark saw, for whatever reason, the Crow were at least setting the stage for contact. They made their presence known.



Crow Village on the Plains
by George Catlin



Absaroka Scouts - Elk River
by Charles Fritz



Pa-ris-ka-roo-pa
"The Two Crows"



Ee-he-a-duck-chee-a
"He Who Ties His Hair Before"

Crow Chiefs
by George Catlin

THE DIPLOMACY OF THE CROW

The Apsáalooke, for their part, also had a political agenda: to maintain independence and sovereignty, and to proceed cautiously. Apparently, they were interested but felt no necessity to actively or consistently engage with Clark, or any other non-Indians for that matter. They were relatively self-sufficient economically, being skilled hunters of buffalo and other animals and gatherers of many plants. And they were already tied into a network which interfaced the aboriginal and non-Indian trade. Tribal historian Joe Medicine Crow believes that in the Crow view, Lewis and Clark were not the first white men to pass through their country and would not be the last.

In 1805, the Crow were not well acquainted with Euro-American people and their customs. Crow elder Barney Old Coyote says that:

"the white people were known to the Crows as far back as the 1700s. They had a name for them. They called them the Yellow Eyes [baaishtashiile] ... That was a name that the Crows identify white people with to this day. During those encounters, they looked at them with some curiosity but did not get to know them very well until 1825, when they first entered into their trading at Fort Mandan in Dakota territory. They signed what they called a Friendship Treaty with the United States of America." (Old Coyote 2002)

The Hidatsa leader Le Borgne may have been exaggerating in June 1805 when he told Francois Larocque and Charles McKenzie that the Crow "know not white men," but it was substantially true. (McKenzie 1960: 344 & 1985: 244)

Larocque reported that "they have never had any traders with them," meaning no traders who resided among the Crow. (Larocque 1985: 212) William Clark's tabulation prepared for the Secretary of War in 1806 reported that the Crow do not maintain commerce and traffick with traders or trading companies. (Thwaites 1905, Vol. 6: 103) The most contact they had was during visits to the Mandan and Hidatsa villages, although a very few traders may have traveled briefly with them.

McKenzie evaluated the situation from the perspective of a Euro-American businessman when he:

"traded a few things with the Corbeaux [Crow]. Their beaver skins were badly dressed and split upon the back, in the place of the belly, a proof that they were not much acquainted with the importance of that favorite article of commerce. Afraid to ask too small a price, they seemed averse from dealing with me, for they would have a white man pay four times the value of a thing, or often let him go without." (McKenzie 1960: 346 & 1985: 245)

His ethnocentrism led him to attribute the Indian method of skinning along the back of the animal and the Crow response to price values more to ignorance than to intelligent bargaining.

Le Borgne expanded further about the significance of the whites to Red Calf and the other Crow present:

"White men are curious; they come from a far, they know much, and wish to learn more... White men love beaver and they are continually in search of beaver for its skin. What use they make of the skin I know not, but they give us good things in return; they exchange it for guns, ammunition &c. Our fathers were not acquainted with white men; we live better than our fathers lived." (McKenzie 1960: 348 & 1985: 247, 170-171)

Larocque understood that the Crow "know very well how to make unadvantageous bargain in their sales and purchases." (Larocque 1910: 58) And nearly half a century later, the American Fur Company clerk and artist Rudolph Kurz would write of the Crow that "they are exceedingly shrewd in business matters – a match for our traders." (Kurz 1937: 214)

McKenzie also writes of his and Larocque's first meeting with the Crow leader Red Calf:

"When we offered to shake hands with this great man, he did not understand the intention and stood motionless until he was informed that shaking hands was the sign of friendship among white men: then he stretched forth both his hands to receive ours." (McKenzie 1960: 345 & 1985: 245)

With an explanation, the Crow would instantly have known the significance of the Jefferson peace medal with two hands shaking, which Lewis and Clark carried. Of course, the American leaders assumed that such a gesture and image was universal.

Many Indians were suspicious of the white strangers and the dangers which might come from them. John Ewers notes "the aloofness and suspicion of Hidatsa relations with the explorers." (Ewers 1968: 49-50) Interpreting the reports of Alexander Henry, James Ronda writes:

"The power of the whites could be shared with others by wearing or using things associated with them. Some Hidatsa-proper villagers gave voice to that belief when they claimed that the gifts, flags, and silver medals distributed by Lewis and Clark contained powerful evil forces that reflected the dangerous intent of the expedition. Fearing 'bad medicine' in the objects, the Hidatsas thought the best thing to be done with such hazardous goods was to pawn them off on unsuspecting enemies." (Ronda 1984: 104)

In Alexander Henry's view, the Hidatsa gave the Jefferson medals and flags they received "to their enemies in hopes the bad medicine would fall upon them." (Henry 1965, Vol. 1: 349-350)

Indeed, there were disastrous consequences from contact with outsiders. Larocque would learn about the effect of the 1800-1803 smallpox epidemics on the Crow tribe, which he believed had reduced their population by two-thirds, from between 14,000 and 20,000 to between 2100 and 3000 people. (Larocque 1910: 55 & 1985: 206) There is no doubt that they associated white men with power, which involved both bad things, such as illness and invasions, and potential good things, such as trade and alliances.

[NOTE #9]

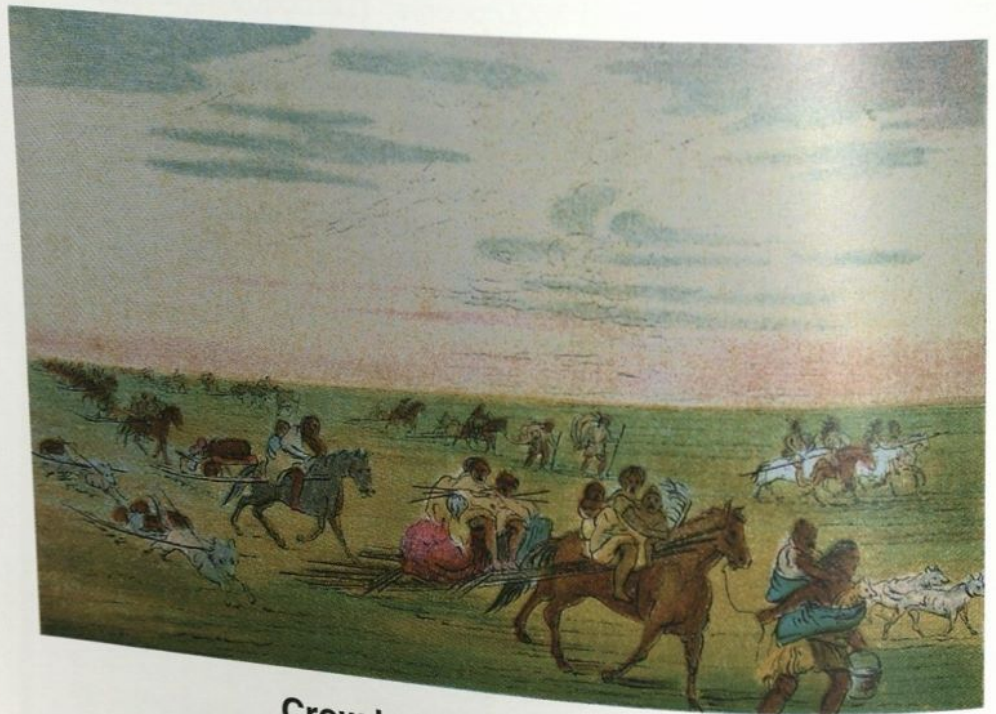
The Crow participated in and encouraged an image of themselves as an independent, assertive people. Historian Lewis Saum writes that during the early nineteenth century the Crow and other tribes seem to have taken a "self-interested approach" to relations with fur traders. (Saum 1965: 140) Another perspective is given by Lt. James H. Bradley, who concluded from conversations with his Crow scouts in 1876 that:

"The Crows seemed pleased with the presence of the white men among them, and if they were at all deserving, treated them with consideration. The white employees of the Yellowstone post always took naturally to the customs of the Crows and after a short residence among them were scarcely to be distinguished in their long hair, breech clouts and other articles of Indian attire, from the savages themselves." (Bradley 1900: 263)

During the year that Lewis and Clark were on their journey to the Pacific coast, many opinions must have been spread in the Mandan and Hidatsa villages. The Apsáalooke also were links in the intertribal intelligence network. On 26 July 1806, when Alexander Henry was in the "great Mandane village," he wrote that

"a party of 30 Rocky Mountain Indians of the Crow nation had arrived with their families [probably about 120 people total] at the Big Bellies' [Hidatsa] villages... They brought word that the American party of Captains Lewis and Clark had ascended the Missouri, crossed the Rocky Mountains, and fallen upon a large river which they supposed would conduct them to the ocean. ... [and] also informed us that these gentlemen had had trouble with the Snake [Shoshone], Flathead [Salish], and Oreille [Nez] Perce nations, who inhabit the Rocky Mountains." (Henry, 1965, Vol. 1: 398).

It is not known exactly what the Crow learned or how many leaders and tribal bands in the Yellowstone, Big Horn, and Wind River area eventually had knowledge of Lewis and Clark, or what their opinions were. What is known definitely is that Clark's horses were being captured during that same week the Crow brought news about the Expedition to the Mandan village.



Crow Indians on the Move
by George Catlin

DID THE CROW TAKE THE HORSES?

No one knows positively that it was Crow who captured the horses from Clark and Pryor. In 1805, Lewis and Clark had encountered no Indians between the Mandan and Hidatsa villages in north-central North Dakota and the Shoshone in south-west Montana. Along the Missouri River, they did see smoke from distant fires, evidence of very recent Assiniboine, Gros Ventre (Atsina), or Blackfeet camps, tipi rings, war lodges, prayer cloth offerings, buffalo jumps, fresh horse tracks, and one day an Indian dog even wandered into their camp. According to oral traditions, people from Assiniboine and Gros Ventre camps were watching them. (Moulton 1987, Vol. 4: 81-439 & 1988, Vol. 5: 7-67)

On the Yellowstone, Clark's party encountered no Indians except the lone Indian which Charbonneau saw, at a distance, on the bluffs near present Park City. They saw smoke signals and members of the party observed Indian forts, a Sun Dance lodge, and pictographs. Other travelers in the middle Yellowstone region between 1805 and 1810 did encounter several tribes.

When Francois Larocque traveled with the Crow in 1805, he reported a camp of Atsina (Gros Ventre, or fort de prairie Big Belly), a war party of Assiniboines, and two newly abandoned camps of "strange Indians." (Larocque 1985: 185-186, 190-191) In 1808, trappers John Colter and George Drouillard met camps which might have been Crow, Cheyenne, Sioux, Arapaho, or Salish/Flathead). (Skarsten 1964: 265, 267; Harris 1952: 73-114) Blackfeet would harass the Crow and American fur trappers and posts from the Three Forks area to the Yellowstone-Missouri confluence area and south to Bad Pass Trail in the Big Horn Mountains during the first decades of the 19th century.

Shoshone, Flathead, Nez Perce, and Hidatsa sometimes traveled with the Crow, sometimes each tribe traveled separately, and at other times the tribes were in conflict with each other. (Denig 1961: 144; Ewers 1968: 25-26; Larocque 1985: 185, 189, 191-192, 219, 220) It is known that other tribes came into the area on the western edge of Crow country between the Big Horn River and the Black Hills, on hunts, to trade, or for raids from the late 1700s to the 1820s. Those tribes included Hidatsa, Mandan, Arikara, Sioux (Lakota), and Cheyenne. [NOTE #10]

Members of any of the tribes which were known to have frequented the Yellowstone River valley could have captured the horses. However, it is apparent that Clark himself credited the Apsáalooke. His prepared speech reflected that opinion, for he was in the heart of Crow country and ready to meet them.

Charbonneau, who saw one Indian on a bluff across the Yellowstone, had interacted with and lived with the Mandan and Hidatsa for almost a decade before the Expedition and was familiar with the Crow. So was Sacagawea, whose people sometimes allied with the Crow and who had been captured by a Hidatsa war party at the Three Forks of the Missouri when she was about ten years old. On the later Clark-Maximilian map there is annotation that the Crow stole horses from Pryor. (Moulton 1983, Vol. 1: Atlas map 117).

There are various Indian evaluations about whether the Crow captured Clark's horses. Barney Old Coyote reports that during the past few decades

"when it comes to references to Crow Indians in the Lewis and Clark journal, the Culture Committee and Crows familiar with the Crow history ... say, 'how do they know these were Crows?' They had people who did not know one tribe from another in most cases, especially if they did not see them. So it was easy to say somebody took our horses. Well, those could be Crow, those could be Sioux, those could be Assiniboine. They could point the finger at somebody else. So, we do not take that as seriously ... as the readers of Steven Ambrose or others would have us take it. 'Oh, those Crows stole horses from the Clark expedition.' Maybe, maybe not..." (Old Coyote 2002: 4; Ambrose 1996)

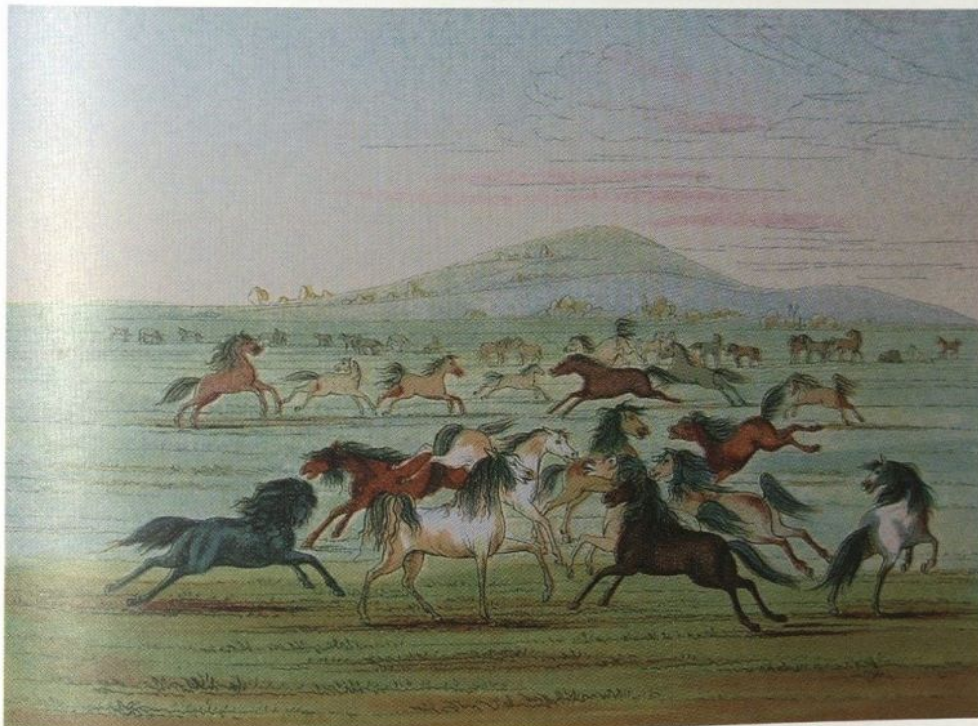
Contemporary Blackfeet historian-storyteller Curly Bear Wagner considered it possible that Blackfeet might have captured the first horses on the north side of the river, because raiding parties sometimes were in the area, but also concluded that no one really knows. (Habermann 2002: 4)

Other accounts have it that the Crow do take credit for capturing horses from Clark. A humorous story narrated by Crow artist-storyteller William Big Day tells of one early morning when a Crow war party saw an Indian woman, probably Sacagawea, with a baby and group of white men in a boat with a sail floating down the Yellowstone. They captured some horses, among which were "thoroughbreds" and others with long ears and flat noses. They took the best ones, leaving the others. Later they heard that Blackfeet had taken the rest, still in darkness or dim light, and when daylight came the Blackfeet saw that they had captured mostly mules.

Historian Joseph Mussulman writes that "Some Crow people still smile at the recollection of the horse incident. 'We didn't steal 'em,' one told me. 'We just took 'em.'" (Mussulman 2005) He also says that "some Crow people today won't brag about taking the expedition's horses. It was 'too easy.'" (Mussulman 2002)

Contemporary Crow historian-storyteller Howard Boggess suggests further that "It is said that the Crow did not count the capturing of horses from Clark and Pryor as a coup because the white men slept too much." (quoted in Thackeray 2001) During a tour of historical sites on the Crow reservation sponsored by Little Big Horn College in 1991, I kidded that this was the first time the Crow charged a "road tax" on the white man, and elder Lloyd (Mickey) Old Coyote and others laughed and agreed.

In any event, Clark and his men might have been more watchful if they had better appreciated the importance, motivations, and techniques of the Plains Indian horse raiding customs. But they were tired from the many struggles and injuries they experienced during the long two years they had been traveling. And they were trying to hurry home.



Wild Horses on the Prairie
by George Catlin