



Irrigation on the Crow Reservation / tribal and community benefits of the proposed Hardin Unit, Big Horn County, Montana  
by Raymond Eugene Borton

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in Agricultural Economics  
Montana State University  
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**Abstract:**

Irrigation on the Crow reservation is a complex problem involving groups and institutions as well as economic considerations. This thesis shows the background and current status of the problems which must be considered in making development decisions and plans for the Hardin Unit, This 42,600 acre project is to be made possible by the Yellowtail Dam, now under construction.

Tribal benefits from the Hardin Unit depend on the solution of complex heirship problems and Indian administration policies. Development and operation of irrigated land by Indians would require extensive changes in education, credit, employment and attitudes.

The indirect benefits to be gained by the Hardin community are considered, Business expansion through farm and non-farm population is the basis for measurement. The benefits are compared to the indirect costs including income foregone and social expenses.

This investigation prompts the following recommendations: (1) Land ownership may be simplified through an expanded tribal purchase program and by revision and passage of the Church Bill in Congress. BIA. policies on limitations to heirship status and formation of Indian land enterprises plus encouragement for Indian owner-operators expansion through education and credit facilities would also be helpful, (2) Indian administration may be assisted through more Indian employment and responsibility within the BIA, contracting new activities to agencies outside the BIA, expanding and improving tribal organization, (3) Indian education will be aided by expansion and improvement of existing programs emphasizing teacher recognition, materials adaptation, parental involvement, preschool training and job training for adults, (4) Credit programs should be expanded for those Indians who are interested in and able to operate farms and ranches. (5) Indian employment will be enhanced through continued full employment policies, discouragement' of reliance on outside income, industrial development and tribal enterprises.

The development of the Hardin Unit may be recommended as an economy stabilizing measure. It would add to short sugar production and subtract from surplus wheat. The question of sharing costs between taxpayers in general, landowners and/or water users and the community residents receiving indirect benefits remains. The formation of a conservancy district is recommended.

The value of the indirect benefits to the Crow Tribe is investigated and found to be slight with respect to stabilization benefits and the development of socio-economic complexes. Employment and business expansion will benefit the Crow only if there is a high demand for labor and more Indians take an active part in farm and non-farm business operations.

This report concludes with a discussion of the alternative methods of irrigation development as proposed by Sargent in his accompanying study.

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MONTANA

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RAYMOND E. BORTON

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in

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Approved:

  
Head, Major Department

  
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VITA

Raymond Eugene Borton, son of the late Howard E. Borton and Frances Frost Borton, was born September 11, 1931 in Lansing, Michigan. His education began at Grove District No. 2 and he graduated from Lansing Sexton High School in June, 1949. He completed his B.S. in Plant Science at Cornell University, graduating in February, 1954. His 4-H activities led to selection as a delegate to the National 4-H Conference in 1950 and as an International Farm Youth Exchange delegate to The Netherlands in 1952.

Between graduation from Cornell University and entrance into graduate work at Michigan State University in January 1956, he served as a commissioned officer in the U. S. Army. While at Michigan State University he was a graduate assistant with the National Project in Agricultural Communications and majored in Agricultural Economics with a minor in Journalism. He received his M.S. in 1957.

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Since June, 1961, he has been a graduate student at Montana State College where he and his wife were assisted by International Cooperation Center Fellowships and spent one quarter in Mexico under this program. During the summers of 1962 and 1963 both he and his wife have been employed as staff members of a Peace Corps Training program. In addition, he was a special lecturer to a Peace Corps training program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in September, 1963.

His appointment as a graduate research assistant in the Department of Agricultural Economics of Montana State College began in September, 1963.

He was married June 4, 1961 to Verena Rachel Reckendorf who received her B.A. in Foreign Languages from the University of Connecticut in 1961 and her M.S. in International Studies from Montana State College in 1963.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The research project under which this thesis was completed was made possible by the Missouri River Basin Investigations Project, whose director, Dr. Walter C. Fuhrman, has been most helpful during the investigations. The assistance of his staff was also greatly appreciated.

The help of the Bureau of Indian Affairs staff in Crow Agency, the Big Horn County Extension Service staff, members of the Bureau of Reclamation staff and business leaders of Hardin and Billings played a significant part in the success of this study. The approval of the Crow Tribal Industrial Development Committee, headed by Mr. Henry Old Coyote, and the Land Committee, headed by Mr. Louis Yellowmule, was instrumental in the development of the project.

It has been a pleasure to work with Mr. Robert Sargent whose related work will complete the project.

To the author's wife, Verena, goes special gratitude for her encouragement, patience and editorial assistance.

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## ABSTRACT

Irrigation on the Crow reservation is a complex problem involving groups and institutions as well as economic considerations. This thesis shows the background and current status of the problems which must be considered in making development decisions and plans for the Hardin Unit. This 42,600 acre project is to be made possible by the Yellowtail Dam, now under construction.

Tribal benefits from the Hardin Unit depend on the solution of complex heirship problems and Indian administration policies. Development and operation of irrigated land by Indians would require extensive changes in education, credit, employment and attitudes.

The indirect benefits to be gained by the Hardin community are considered. Business expansion through farm and non-farm population is the basis for measurement. The benefits are compared to the indirect costs including income foregone and social expenses.

This investigation prompts the following recommendations: (1) Land ownership may be simplified through an expanded tribal purchase program and by revision and passage of the Church Bill in Congress. BIA policies on limitations to heirship status and formation of Indian land enterprises plus encouragement for Indian owner-operators expansion through education and credit facilities would also be helpful. (2) Indian administration may be assisted through more Indian employment and responsibility within the BIA, contracting new activities to agencies outside the BIA, expanding and improving tribal organization. (3) Indian education will be aided by expansion and improvement of existing programs emphasizing teacher recognition, materials adaptation, parental involvement, preschool training and job training for adults. (4) Credit programs should be expanded for those Indians who are interested in and able to operate farms and ranches. (5) Indian employment will be enhanced through continued full employment policies, discouragement of reliance on outside income, industrial development and tribal enterprises.

The development of the Hardin Unit may be recommended as an economy stabilizing measure. It would add to short sugar production and subtract from surplus wheat. The question of sharing costs between taxpayers in general, landowners and/or water users and the community residents receiving indirect benefits remains. The formation of a conservancy district is recommended.

The value of the indirect benefits to the Crow Tribe is investigated and found to be slight with respect to stabilization benefits and the development of socio-economic complexes. Employment and business expansion will benefit the Crow only if there is a high demand for labor and more Indians take an active part in farm and non-farm business operations.

This report concludes with a discussion of the alternative methods of irrigation development as proposed by Sargent in his accompanying study.

PART I. BACKGROUND AND BASIC BLOCKS TO INDIAN  
DEVELOPMENT OF HARDIN UNIT.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Introduction

The Crow Indians and the residents of Big Horn County will soon face the decision of approving or disapproving the proposed Hardin Unit Irrigation Project and deciding the manner of organization for the project if it is approved. The need for information on which to base these decisions and possible plans has prompted this study of the problems and benefits of the Hardin Unit Irrigation Project.

The research project of which this study is a part was initiated and financially supported by the Missouri River Basin Investigations Project (MRBI) whose office is located with the Bureau of Indian Affairs Area Office in Billings, Montana. In part, the contract between MRBI and Montana State College asks that the project "identify and describe factors, both physical and human, which at present or in the future are likely to prevent Indians from achieving the physically potential level of agriculture economically most advantageous to them." This statement has become the basis for Part I of this thesis--Background and Basic Blocks to Indian Development of the Hardin Unit. The contract also asks that the costs and benefits of developing the Hardin Unit to the Indians and the communities be identified and evaluated. This suggestion has become the guiding force for Part II of this thesis--Community Development Relative to the Hardin Unit.

Part-III Analysis and Conclusions, is prepared in fulfillment of MRBI's request for a comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of development to the Indian people. The problems of development are described and the possibilities of Indian participation are evaluated.

For a complete picture of costs and benefits and the various ways the Hardin Unit could be developed this report will be combined with the forthcoming work of Robert Sargent who is working under other parts of the same contract. His presentation of farm plans and summaries of direct production costs and benefits from irrigation development, as well as his analysis of various land development plans, will provide additional data for decision making pertaining to the construction of the Hardin Unit.

The plan of this presentation is to provide background material and the current situation on the Crow Reservation in preparation for the analysis and conclusions which complete the paper. Before the specific problems are outlined, Chapter I presents background on the Crow Tribe, Big Horn County and the Yellowtail Dam in order to show the origin of some of the facets and complexities of the problems to follow.

The institutional blocks to Indian development of the Hardin Unit are the main emphasis of Part I. Because two-thirds of the 42,600 acres which could be irrigated by the Yellowtail Dam in the Hardin Unit are within the boundaries of the Crow Reservation, development becomes more than the usual matter of farm layout and operation. Decisions about irrigation development in this case involve the complex land ownership problems of heirship and trust status, plus the leasing arrangements

which have evolved on the reservation lands.

Other main problems which are presented in a similar manner, showing the background the evolvement of the general problem and the development of the current specific situation on the Crow Reservation, are Indian Administration, Indian education, credit facilities for Indians and employment for Indians. An understanding of the background of each of these leads to a better basis for analysis of the present situation. Study of the general problem as well as the one specific to the Crow Reservation suggests possible solutions and guides the recommendations for the Hardin Unit development.

The construction of the Hardin Unit Irrigation Project will result in various kinds of benefits to the Big Horn County community as well as to the Crow Tribe. Part II of this report presents Community Development Relative to the Hardin Unit, using various methods of measurement and estimation.

The development of the Hardin Unit will result in changing the pattern of dryland grain farming and cattle ranching to one of irrigated crop production. The details of this transition and how it may be accomplished are to be presented in the accompanying report by Sargent. For the purposes of this paper, an increase in population is assumed because of the proposed irrigation development and the expansion of business, trade, employment, etc., is calculated from this population increase. The measurement of these so called indirect development benefits follows the techniques tested by several investigators studying the impact of irrigation development on the local and general economy.

These previous studies and methodology developments are presented and applied to Big Horn County.

Stabilization benefits are discussed as they might apply in this case. The integration of irrigated crop production and surrounding range areas, the stabilization of farm incomes, farm size and land values are investigated in their applicability to Big Horn County. Population, business, and tax base stabilization are also presented.

Irrigation development and the increase in population which it brings will have an effect on several socio-economic complexes of the area including schools, health and hospital facilities, banking facilities, organizational level and marketing facilities. Each of these is discussed, showing the present situation in Big Horn County and how the proposed irrigation development might affect it.

Special problems in Big Horn County which are not covered in the above mentioned sections on stabilization and socio-economic complexes are outlined. These include the separation of the Indian community, the possibility of irrigation development other than the Hardin Unit, the expansion of the sugar beet growing industry and the problem of business leaving Big Horn County for other trade centers. Each of these is discussed.

Besides the direct costs of development such as construction costs for canals and other water distribution equipment, and the costs of preparing the land for proper irrigation there are other less direct costs to be considered. This report presents only these latter less direct costs. In this paper the income forgone is measured using farm and

ranch budget analysis to calculate the income generated on the land under its present use pattern. The employment changes which would be expected due to irrigation development are discussed and the social costs to the community such as education, health, welfare and roads are also considered. When this information is combined with that being prepared by Sargent, a comprehensive picture of the possible methods of developing the Hardin Unit will emerge.

The analysis and conclusions presented in Part III pertain to all the above mentioned areas of inquiry. Following an overall economic view of the Hardin Unit's possible development, recommendations pertaining to the blocks to Indian development are presented. Possible solutions to the land ownership, Indian administration, Indian education, credit for Indians and Indian employment problems are included. In the concluding sections a general outlook on the entire problem is presented together with some comments on the more limited Indian outlook. The value of community development to the Indians of the area is analyzed as well.

The final section presents the six systems of development proposed by Sargent and a discussion of each, using the information and analysis developed earlier to determine the potential of each system.

Before discussing the specific institutional problems and analyzing benefits and costs of the Hardin Unit Development, a summary of the background of several aspects is in order. Pertinent historical and statistical material will be presented concerning the Crow Tribe, Big Horn County, and Yellowtail Dam.

## The Crow Tribe

### Origin

Today's Crow Tribe resides in the heart of its traditional homeland, the valleys of the Yellowstone and the Big Horn Rivers. Closely related to the Hidatsa and friends of the Mandan tribes of the Dakota Territory, the Crow were constantly at war with the Blackfeet, Cheyenne and Dakota (Sioux). Their close ties with the Hidatsa led to one estimate that they were split from that group not more than 500 years ago.<sup>1/</sup>

The name "Crow" seems to be a mistranslation for a word denoting a bird which is no longer seen on the reservation. Its description leads to the belief that it is the "kite", a bird whose range included parts of Nebraska and Kansas at a time when the Crow lived in that area.

Another definition of the Indian word Absaroke by which the Crow were known is "sharp people." This translation is given by a Crow in his master's thesis in anthropology. This might refer to their reputation as warriors.<sup>2/</sup>

### Contacts With Non-Indians

Perhaps the earliest recorded writing of some details about the Crow comes from Prince Maximilian of Wied, in his "Travels in the Interior of North America, 1832-1834." He met them as a visiting band among the

---

<sup>1/</sup> Robert H. Lowie, The Crow Indians, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1935, p. 4.

<sup>2/</sup> Joe Medicine Crow, quoted in Missouri River Basin Investigations Project Report No. 147, Cultural and Economic Status of the Crow People, Billings, Montana, Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1955, p. 2.

Mandans of North Dakota with whom they were on friendly footing. The Prince's inquiries prompted the information that their territory was at that time bounded on the north or northwest by the Yellowstone River and extended "round Bighorn River, towards the sources of the Cheyenne River and the Rocky Mountains."<sup>3/</sup>

Other information gathered by the Prince led him to estimate that the tribe had about 1,200 warriors and was said to possess more horses than any other tribe of the Missouri.

From his observations, the Prince found the Crow to be fine figures of men with exceptionally long hair and the women were very skillful in various crafts. He particularly admired their shirts and dresses of bighorn sheep leather, embroidered and ornamented with dyed porcupine quills. The men rode horses colorfully decked with red blankets and mountain lion skins.

The Crow reaction to Whites was recorded by the Prince: "The Crows, in particular, as the proudest of the Indians, are said to despise the Whites. They do not, however, kill them, but often plunder them."<sup>4/</sup>

Prince Maximilian was treated hospitably in the teepee of Chief Rotten-Belly even though the chief was in mourning and hence was plastered with clay, had cut his hair, and was wearing his worst clothes.

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<sup>3/</sup> Prince Maximilian of Wied, Travels in the Interior of North America, 1832-1834, in Vol. XXIII of Early Western Travels, 1748-1846, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, Cleveland, The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1906, p. 352.

<sup>4/</sup> Ibid., p. 351.

Exact information about the early history of the Crow is nearly non-existent. Some theorists believe that they moved from the East and gave up habits of living in villages of huts, growing crops and making pottery to become roving hunters in the Plains as late as 1760. By 1800 they were typical roving buffalo hunters. Some comments from other tribes indicate that the Crow were an extremely powerful force before the smallpox plague of 1780-81 when their numbers were drastically reduced.<sup>5/</sup>

Probably the earliest recorded white visitor to the land of the Crow was a French trader, Francois Antoine Larocque, whose journal of a journey with the Crow from North Dakota to the Powder River and Yellowstone River area indicates that they were in full possession of the area in 1805. Larocque's description of the Big Horn Canyon is the first record of a white visit to that area.<sup>6/</sup>

Lewis and Clark's famed journey up the Missouri and on to the Pacific took them through the northern edge of Crow Country and on his return in 1806, Captain Clark came through the Yellowstone Valley. However, he did not meet any of the Crow Tribe. That they did see him is evident from the fact that all of his horses were stolen in the area.

An Army Lieutenant who was commander of some Crow scouts in 1876,

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<sup>5/</sup> George E. Hyde, Indians of the High Plains, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1959, p. 177.

<sup>6/</sup> Francois Antoine Larocque, The Journal of Francois Antoine Larocque, From the Assiniboine River to the Yellowstone--1805, translated and edited by Ruth Haslitt, "Sources of Northwest History No. 20", Historical Reprints, Missoula, State University of Montana, 1934, p. 19.

investigated and recorded what he could of Crow history with the help of a "white" Crow who was residing among the tribe at that time--Thomas Laforge. Lieutenant Bradley states that:

By the traditions of the tribe it is made to appear that they once dwelt upon the waters of the Gulf of Mexico or along the Atlantic Coast in Georgia or South Carolina. The Crows are remarkable for the evidence they present of having at some early period in their history received a considerable admixture of white blood; and one hundred years ago the Cherokee Indians of Georgia had a tradition of having in former times expelled a tribe of white Indians from that country, who, they said, fled to the Mississippi and then up the Missouri where they yet dwelt. Among the other evidences of their Southeastern origin are traditions that they once dwelt in a land of perpetual summer, where they grew corn, and they possess a lingering dim knowledge of the alligator which could only have been acquired in a southern land. They say that they once dwelt upon a great water so broad they did not know its extent, and that it was out of this water that the first white men came to them, as well as the first horses they ever saw. This tradition is almost lost, and all their other traditions are vague and indistinct.<sup>7/</sup>

Another journal of the land of the Crow, published about one century ago, comes from an Army officer's wife, Margaret L. Carrington, who arrived in Wyoming with a unit which built and manned Fort Phillip Kearney in Wyoming. Her impressions of the Crow and their homeland are summarized as follows: The valleys of the Yellowstone, the Tongue and the Powder Rivers were the heart of Ab-sa-ra-ka, the home of the Crow, and in 1866 they were being pressed from both sides into an ever smaller area. On the west were white settlements brought by the mining discoveries in western Montana and the farm and ranching development of

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<sup>7/</sup> James H. Bradley, The March of the Montana Column, edited by Edgar I. Stewart, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1961, p. 75.

the Bitterroot and Gallatin Valleys. On the east, the Sioux and Cheyenne had combined forces to push them out of part of the good game grounds. They ventured not much farther than the west bank of the Big Horn at that point.

Colonel Carrington's mission was to establish a safe passage through Crow Country for the new Bozeman Trail, a route to the mines of Bannack, Virginia City, Alder Gulch and Helena, Montana which was 500 miles shorter than the journey through Salt Lake City. The Crow were not opposed to the new route but the Sioux and Cheyenne, who were occupying the eastern part of the Crow Country, were opposed to any white encroachment on their hunting grounds.

Colonel Carrington, in editing his wife's narrative, says:

Among the tribes of the Northwest, the Crow Indian stands first in manliness and physical perfection.

While they alone have the title to negotiate the right of way for the New Virginia City Road, independently of its occupation by the Sioux and their allies, they also have pride of race and nation. They can be trusted as friends within its boundaries whenever they are treated with the consideration they deserve. Would white men do more?"<sup>8/</sup>

#### Tribal Customs

Depending on buffalo and being constantly at war with the Blackfeet, Cheyenne and Sioux created among the Crow a society of skilled hunters, horsemen and warriors whose glory was in "counting coups,"

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<sup>8/</sup> Margaret I. Carrington, Ab-Sa-Ra-Ka Land of Massacre, edited by Colonel Henry B. Carrington, Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1879, p. 18.

such as touching or killing an enemy, leading war parties and stealing horses from an enemy camp. When game was plentiful, everybody feasted, and when it was scarce, everyone was hungry. Lodges were made to be moved quickly and easily and possessions were limited to what could be worn or packed on a moment's notice of approaching enemies or big game movements.

Tribal organization was democratic since eminence depended on individual deeds of merit. Being highly superstitious, a super-natural meaning was attributed to unusual success through the medium of dreams or visions and special powers possessed by certain objects and animals. Sun Dance dolls were highly revered and particular stones and parts of animals were kept as the objects of special attention or worship. Fasting for a vision was practiced by young men who went to the mountains for days to receive their individual omens. The process was repeated on occasions when specific help or revenge was sought.

Kinship patterns were complicated and important. The most important unit was the clan and it was impossible to marry anyone from the same clan. The cohesion within the clan is illustrated by the translation of the Crow word for clan, which is "lodge where there is drift-wood", the connotation being that clansmen cling together like drift-wood lodges along a stream. All men of the same age within a clan referred to each other as brothers.

The Crow word for father extends far beyond the English term and includes a person's paternal uncles, his father's maternal uncles, his paternal aunt's sons and the husband of any aunt by marriage. These

complex relationships led a white man who lived among the Crow during the last part of the nineteenth century to note that the "number of physiological offspring of a particular person in a lodge was neither easily discoverable nor too widely investigated."<sup>9/</sup>

#### Treaties and Events Leading to Their Present Situation

Their being at war with the Sioux and Cheyenne helped to put the Crow on the side of Custer at the time of the ill-fated battle. In earlier treaty negotiations, the Crow fared considerably better than their enemies and retained the heart of their homeland centering on the Big Horn River. Although old hatreds have crumbled somewhat in the years since 1876, there is still a distinct lack of contact between the Crow and the Northern Cheyenne who live on adjoining lands.

In a treaty between the Crow and the United States Government, signed in 1868, all the territory south of the Yellowstone River from where it crosses into Montana near Gardiner to the 107th Meridian, was reserved for the tribe. Included in the treaty were numerous provisions to motivate the Indians to settle down and begin farming on the reservation. Heads of families were given 320 acres and other members over 18 years of age received 80 acres. Those who promised to farm were given a cow and a pair of oxen within 60 days after they had settled. For a period of 30 years, the Indians were to receive a suit of clothing each year on the first day of September. Daily rations of one pound of

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<sup>9/</sup> Thomas B. Marquis, Memoirs of a White Crow Indian, (Thomas H. Leforge), New York, The Century Company, 1918, quoted in Lowie, op. cit., p. 19.

meat and flour per Indian over four years of age who had settled on the reservation were to be provided for a period of four years.

In addition, a sum of \$10 for each roaming Indian and \$20 for each settled one was to be appropriated each year for use by the Secretary of the Interior to purchase what "the condition and necessities of the Indians may indicate to be proper."10/

A final article in the treaty makes an extra effort to motivate the Crow to farming:

Article 12. It is agreed that the sum of \$500 annually, for three years from the date when they commence to cultivate a farm, shall be expended in presents to the ten persons of said tribe, who, in the judgment of the agent may grow the most valuable crops for the respective year."11/

The original 1851 Treaty of Laramie gave the Crow a reservation of 38 million acres. This was first reduced by government order to nine million and later through further land cession to the United States Government, Northern Pacific Railroad, State of Montana school land and sales to non-Indians. Today there are only 1.5 million acres of land held in trust by the government for the Crow Indians and the reservation boundaries extend around 2,282,764 acres which includes private, state and federally-owned lands in addition to the trust lands.12/

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10/ "Treaty with the Crows--1868", Water Resources Survey, Big Horn County, Montana, Part 1, Helena, Montana, State Engineer and State Water Conservation Board, May, 1947, p. 11.

11/ Ibid., p. 12.

12/ Leasing of Indian Trust Lands on Crow Reservation, Montana, Missouri River Basin Investigations Report No. 170, Billings, Montana, Bureau of Indian Affairs, February, 1963, p. 1.

The 1962 Indian population data shows 2,730 Crow residing on the reservation. The Tribe includes 1,356 living off the reservation which brings the total to 4,086. The increase from 1,674 enrolled in 1930 to 2,781 in 1950 to the present more than 4000 illustrates one of the basic Indian problems--a triple population increase in 32 years without increase in land resources.<sup>13/</sup>

More background on land ownership and use, Indian education and employment will be given in following sections on these specific topics.

### Big Horn County

#### Organization and Development

Big Horn County was created in 1913 from parts of Rosebud and Yellowstone Counties. Hardin, the county seat of the 5,025 square miles, was settled in 1907. The 3.2 million acres extend from the Big Horn, Wolf and Pryor Mountains on the Wyoming border in the South nearly to the junction of the Big Horn and Yellowstone Rivers in the North.

Fur traders were the first white men to see what we now know as Big Horn County. Larocque came in 1805, traveling with a band of Crow and a few Snake Indians returning from a visit to the Mandans of North Dakota. He came as far as the foothills of the Big Horn Mountains, and recorded the first description of Big Horn Canyon.

After Captain Clark's description of the wealth of fur to be found in the area had been circulated upon his return to St. Louis in 1806,

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<sup>13/</sup> State of Montana, Biennial Report of the Department of Indian Affairs, Helena, Montana, 1962, p. 2.

there was a flurry of trading enterprises which endeavored to take advantage of the new information. In 1807, Manuel Lisa, a Spaniard from New Orleans, was the first trader to set up business at the mouth of the Big Horn River, according to several records. However, since no remains of a fort can be found at that point and because some indications of a trading establishment have been located at the junction of the Little Big Horn and Big Horn Rivers, it may be guessed that his earliest fort was near the present town of Hardin.

Lisa returned to St. Louis with good accounts of the furs available. With Captain Clark, he set up the Missouri Fur Company which met with misfortune among the Blackfeet in the Gallatin Valley but established good trade with the Crow along the Yellowstone, even though the early fort was abandoned after 1808. Trade continued with roving bands of trappers and traders until 1829 when the American Fur Company established Fort Union at the mouth of the Yellowstone.

Several forts were founded within Crow Country during the following years including Fort Cass in 1831 and Fort Van Buren in 1835, both on the Big Horn, and Fort Sarpy in 1850 on the Yellowstone below the mouth of the Rosebud River.<sup>14/</sup>

The area's entry into American history came on June 26, 1876, when General Custer and his Seventh Cavalry were ambushed and annihilated by a powerful and infuriated band of Sioux and Cheyenne warriors. A year later Fort Custer was established at the junction of the Big Horn and

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<sup>14/</sup> James H. Bradley, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-81.

Little Big Horn Rivers.

Freedom from fear of Indian raids opened up the area to white settlers in the 1880-1890 decade and the first to arrive were ranchers with large company-owned herds of up to 30,000 head. The earliest ranch headquarters in this area were established adjacent to the Wolf and Big Horn Mountains.

The earliest irrigation development was the construction of the Reno Unit of the Crow Indian Project in 1885. The Crow Irrigation Project was authorized in 1891 and is now comprised of 11 separate units which divert water from the Little Big Horn and Big Horn Rivers and the Lodge Grass, Soap, Lost, and Pryor Creeks. Sheep ranching began in the country in 1901.

Indian land adjacent to the Yellowstone River and land in the lower Big Horn Valley was ceded to the government in 1904 and opened to homesteading. Within a few years, a large area had been brought under cultivation and dryland farming prospered from 1906 to 1917 due to abnormal rainfall and high prices. In 1918, the Montana Farming Corporation began operations in Big Horn County. It now farms large areas of wheatland on the reservation under the new name of Campbell Farming Corporation. The original effort was made possible through loans from the Astor family and government approval of the use of the lands to raise wheat for the war effort.<sup>15/</sup>

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<sup>15/</sup> Water Resources Survey, Big Horn County, Montana, op. cit., pp. 12-13.









































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































