

Crow Indians

The Crow Indians originally came from the upper Mississippi Valley and shared the Sioux language. They moved west under pressure from the Sioux and the Cheyenne and settled in the Yellowstone Valley west to the Rocky Mountains, south to the headwaters of the Bighorn River and north to the Mussellshell River. They split into two groups, the Mountain Crows south of the Yellowstone and the River Crows north of the Yellowstone.

They became the wealthiest of all the Plains Indians, with many horses. They were notorious horsethieves, and stole horses from Captain Clark's party as they travelled along the Yellowstone in 1806. Their first contact with the white man was with Manuel Lisa, who built Fort Lisa the first fur post in Montana, at the mouth of the Yellowstone. He traded extensively with the Crows. The Crows welcomed the white man as an ally against the traditional enemies, the Blackfeet and the Sioux.

In 1868, the Crows were given a reservation of a large area south of the Yellowstone River. During the Indian wars they remained friendly to the whites. Crow Indians served as scouts for General Custer at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. This did not help them, however, when the whites wanted their land.

When gold was discovered on the western part of the Crow Reservation and there was pressure on the government for more land, the reservation was changed in the 1880's. In 1884, Crow Agency was moved in the Little Big Horn Valley, and the Reservation was reduced to its current size.