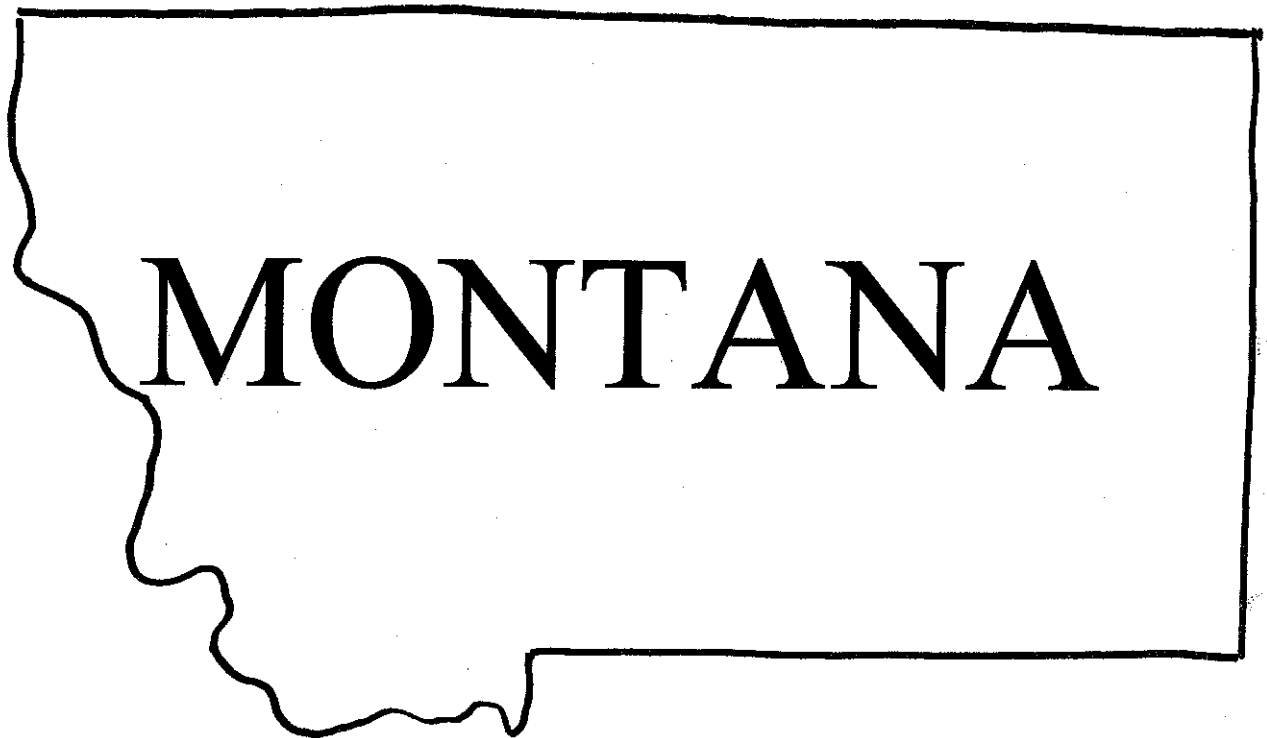


A HISTORY OF



FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL

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CHAPTER ONE

GEOGRAPHY AND EARLY CULTURES

Montana has a rich geological and cultural history. Its history has developed around its geographical features, and because the different parts of the state are so different geographically, their history and culture are very different. Each region has a beauty of its own.

Vocabulary

geology	atlatl	valley	erosion
sediment	pishkun	precipitation	arid
primitive	culture	prairie	evaporation
fossil	nomadic	forage	
recede	watershed	isolated	
glacier	fertile	butte	

Geology of Prehistoric Montana

The story of Montana began before any people arrived. The study of geology tells us the history of the earth from layers of rock. From this rock, scientists can trace the different geological periods of the land that is now Montana.

The first period is known as the **Precambrian Era**, which occurred over 600 million years ago. At this time, the whole region was covered with warm seas. Sediment in the form of mud and sand settled on the bottom of the seas, and over millions of years this sediment was heated and compressed by the earth until it formed "basement rocks." These layers of stone are the foundation of all the other layers which formed later. Primitive plants developed in the seas, leaving fossils which can still be found today.

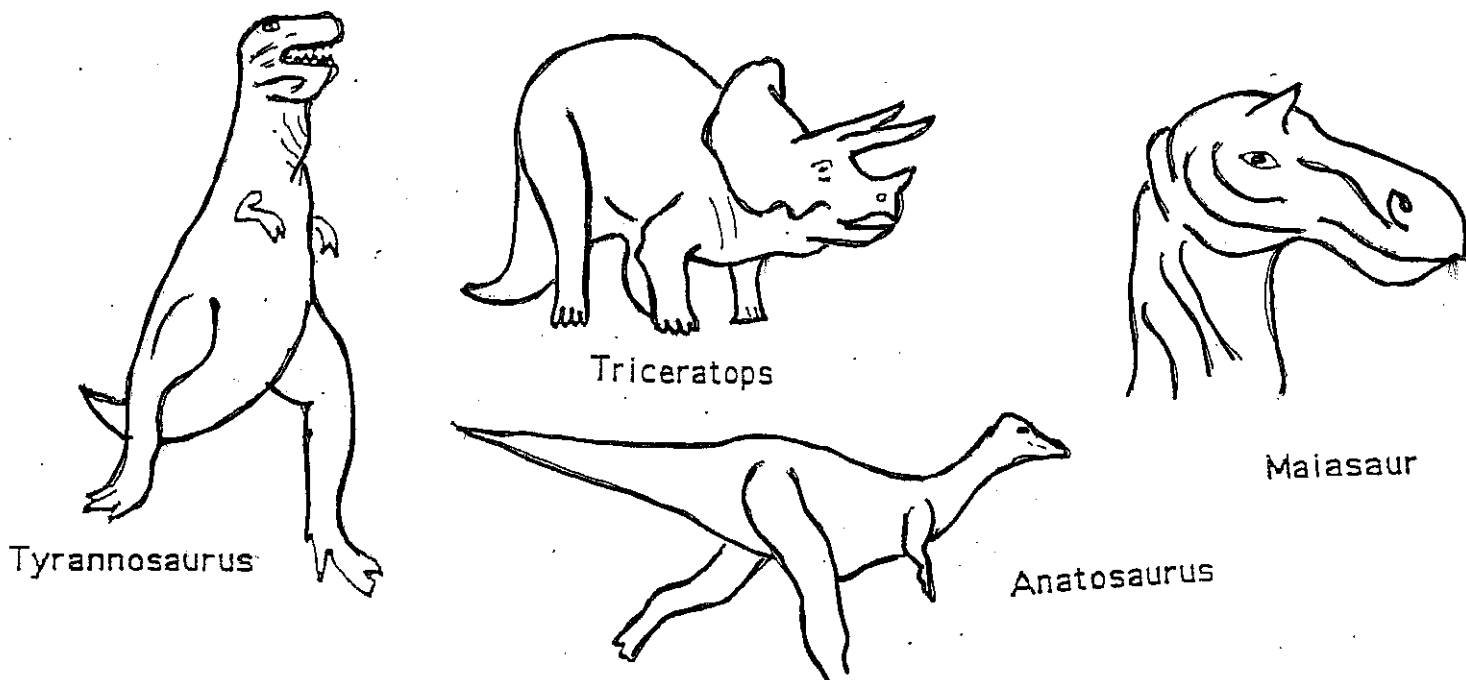
Next came the **Paleozoic Era**, from 600 million to 225 million years ago. During this time, shallow seas again covered the land and then receded, leaving more and more sediment on top of the basement rocks. Plants continued to develop in the seas, and the first animals appeared - primitive fish and amphibians.

The **Mesozoic Era** lasted from 225 million to 65 million years ago. During this time the shallow sea continued to flood the land periodically, depositing more and more mud and sand at the bottom. As animals and plants died, they were buried by more sediment from the sea. Heat and pressure changed some of these remains to fossil

fuels, producing the coal, oil, and natural gas deposits now found in central and eastern Montana.

100 million years ago, Montana got the mountains which we see today. The thick crust of hardened sediment was now twenty-five miles thick. The heat from the center of the Earth cracked this layer, and lifted huge chunks of the rock into long narrow blocks running north and south, which we now know as the Rocky Mountains.

The Mesozoic is also known as the "Age of Dinosaurs." After the seas receded, many dinosaurs roamed the plains east of the Rocky Mountains. The complete skeletons of a Tyrannosaurus and a Triceratops have been found in Montana. Remains of a Anatosaurus (also called a Trachodon) were also discovered. In 1978 Dr. Jack Horner of Montana State University found remains of a Maiasaur, a nesting dinosaur which laid eggs and cared for its young. At the end of the Mesozoic Era, the dinosaurs became extinct due to extreme changes in the landscape and the climate.



The **Cenezoic Era** dates from 65 million years ago to the present time. The first part was the **Tertiary Period**, from 65 million years ago to 2 million years ago. The climate became very warm and dry, like a desert. At this time volcanoes were active. The dinosaurs were gone, and mammals such as elephants, camels and early horses roamed the land. About 2 million years ago, another part of the Cenezoic Era, the

Pleistocene Era, began. The Pleistocene is also known as “The Ice Age,” because the climate became very cold and wet, and heavy snowfall produced glaciers, which are snowfields that never melt. At least four different times glaciers moved into northern Montana, and when they receded during warmer periods, they took sediment with them, forming U-shaped mountain valleys. The melting snow also formed lakes and rivers. A large lake called Glacial Lake Missoula covered most of western Montana when glaciers dammed the Clark Fork River. Marks on the mountains in the Mission and Flathead Valleys show how deep the lake was before the dam broke. The glaciers formed a large part of the geography of Montana that is seen today.

In more recent times, the glaciers have receded. Animals like camels, elephants, and primitive horses disappeared from Montana, and were replaced by more familiar mammals such as elk, deer, bear, bighorn sheep, coyotes, skunks, and rabbits. Birds such as the meadowlark and the bald eagle appeared, and fish such as the trout and salmon inhabited the rivers. People also now made their appearance.

Early People in Montana

Locate the following on the map at the end of this section before reading:

Asia

North America

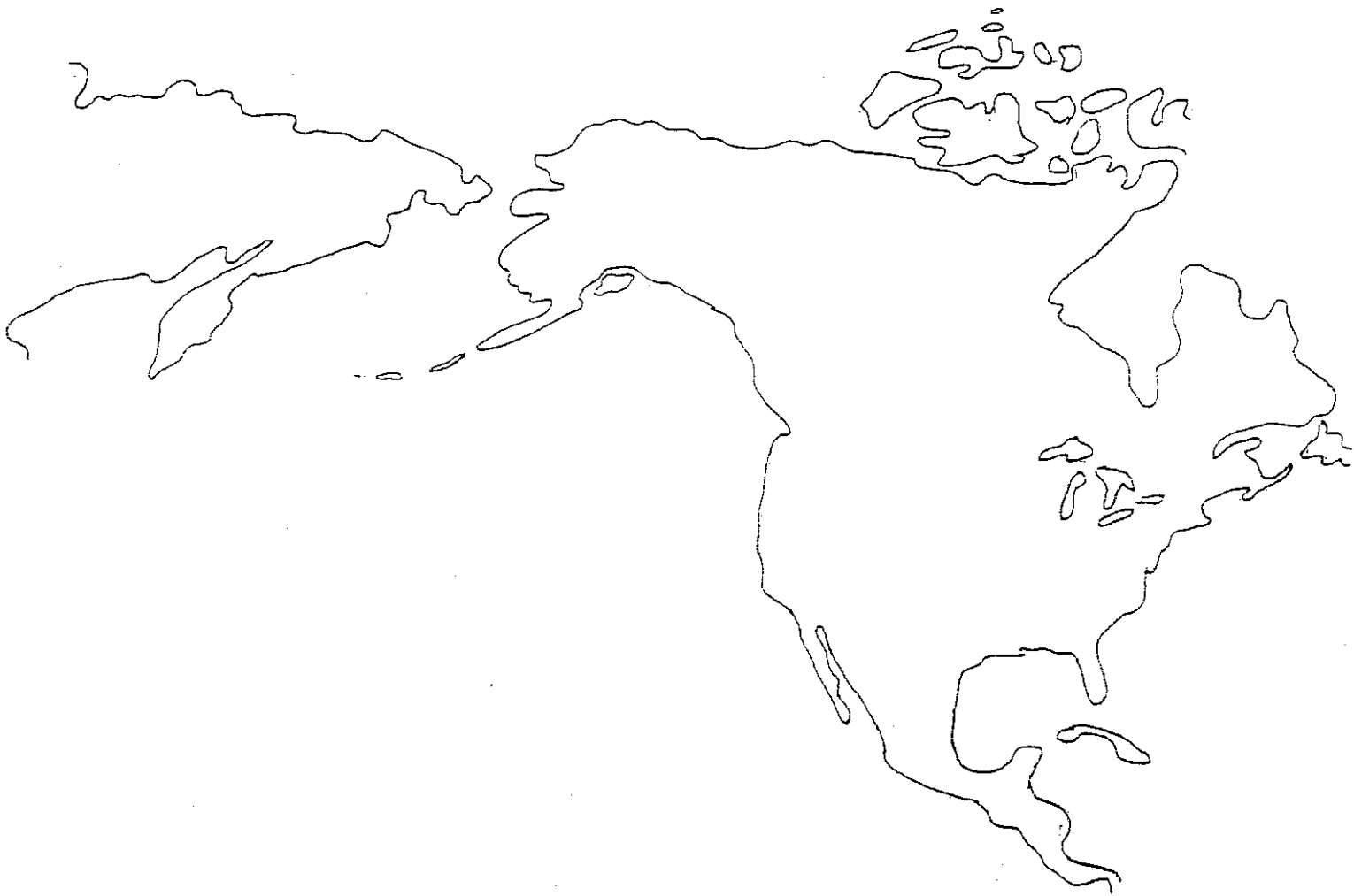
Bering Strait

Humans came to Montana between 30,000 and 10,000 years ago. They traveled on a land bridge across the Bering Strait between Asia and North America, following the mammoth and early bison. They hunted these large animals, which are now extinct, with spears and a weapon called the atlatl, which was a spear which was flung from a long pole, giving it greater distance and accuracy.

About 8,000 years ago, a dry spell caused these large animals to disappear. The early hunters began to hunt the buffalo, or modern bison, that now roamed the plains in large herds. Because they did not have horses, they developed the pishkun, or buffalo jump, to kill large numbers of buffalo. Over the next thousands of years, they improved their hunting techniques, developing the bow and arrow. They traveled great distances trading with other tribes.

The culture of these people remained relatively unchanged until the 1500's, when white Europeans "discovered" North America, mistakenly calling the people they found there "Indians," thinking that they had reached the Asian country of India.

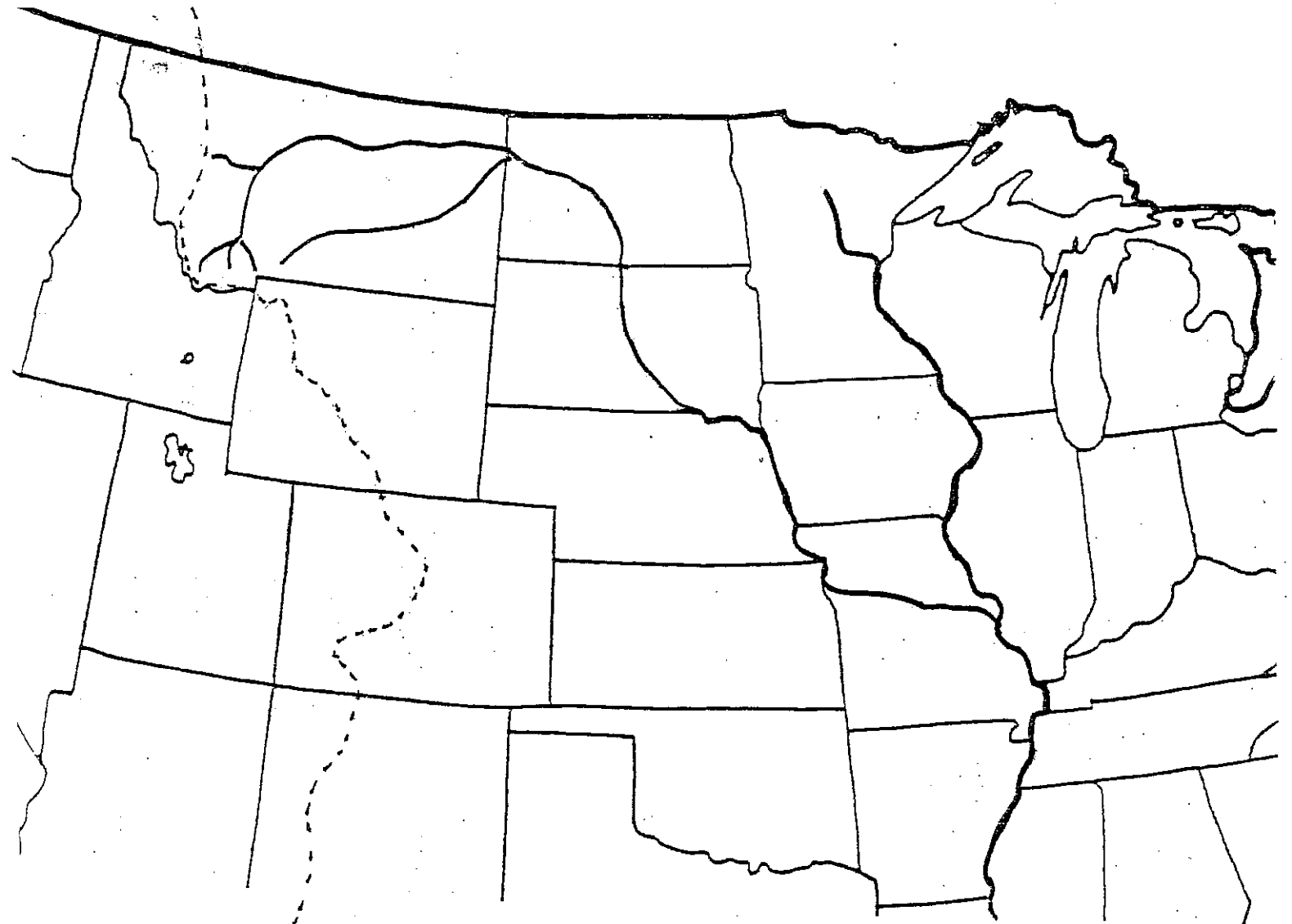
Trace the movement of early people into Montana on the map below:



Indian Tribes of Montana

Locate the following places on the map before reading this section:

Continental Divide	Mississippi River	Idaho	Colorado
Canada	Missouri River	Wyoming	North Dakota
United States	Montana	Utah	South Dakota
Nebraska	Kansas	Minnesota	Iowa
Missouri	Wisconsin	Illinois	Great Lakes
Yellowstone River	Sun River	Three Forks	



As Europeans began to settle in the eastern United States, change came very quickly to the Native Americans. As the whites pushed some of the tribes further west, these tribes would push other tribes, like falling dominoes. The relationships between the different tribes changed as some got horses and guns, making them more powerful than others. The Montana plains Indians quickly adapted their culture to the use of the horse, developing a nomadic lifestyle to follow the herds of buffalo on which they depended.

Tribal areas changed greatly from 1600 to 1800. Most of the tribes we now consider Montana Indians did not originally live here, but migrated into Montana because of pressure from white settlement and other tribes.

The Blackfeet, originally from central and eastern Canada, moved westward under pressure from the Crees. They were made up of three groups - the Siksika; the Kainahs or Bloods, who stayed in Canada; and the Piegans, who moved into north and central Montana.

The Crow Indians originally lived in the upper Mississippi Valley, and were part of the Sioux nation. After separating from the Sioux, they migrated into southeastern Montana along the Yellowstone River.

The Atsina, called Gros Ventres by early French trappers, originated in Minnesota, but due to pressure by the Sioux and Cree tribes, moved westward into northeastern Montana. They were allies of the Piegan Blackfeet.

The Assiniboine tribe also lived in the upper Mississippi Valley and were originally part of the Sioux nation. The Chippewa, Cree, and Sioux forced them onto the plains of Canada and then into northeastern Montana, where they quickly adapted to the plains culture.

The Cheyenne originated in Minnesota, but moved west, where they also adapted to plains life in eastern Montana. They split into two groups in the early 1800's. The northern group stayed in southeastern Montana, and the southern group settled in Colorado and Oklahoma.

The Chippewas and Crees originated in the plains and northern portion of Canada. They lived in Canada until they migrated into Montana in 1885.

The Nez Perce, Kalispel (Pend d'Oreille), Flathead, and Kutenai lived mainly west of the Continental Divide in what are now the states of Montana and Idaho, but their territory extended as far east as the Three Forks and the Sun River Valley. They were finally confined to the area west of the mountains by the powerful Blackfeet and other tribes who moved onto the eastern plains except for one or two yearly trips to the plains to hunt buffalo. These "plateau Indians" were less nomadic than the tribes of the plains, and subsisted mainly on fish, roots, and berries.

Locate the movement of the different tribes on the map at the beginning of this section.

The Geography of Montana

Montana can be divided into three distinct geographical regions, the Western, the Central, and the Eastern. Because they are so different geographically, their history and culture are also very different.

Western Region

The most important geographical feature of the Western Region of Montana is the **continuous mountain ranges**. The Rocky Mountains include a series of more than 50 smaller mountain ranges that run in a northwest-southeast direction through Montana. The Continental Divide runs through these mountains, separating the Columbia and Missouri watersheds. The only way through these mountains is the natural passes found originally by animals and Indians. The mountains rise more than one mile above the surrounding land. From any point in the Western Region, some mountains can be seen.

Another important geographical feature of the Western Region are the **wide fertile valleys** which lie between the mountain ranges. The Bitterroot, Flathead, and Mission Valleys are examples. Because of their fertile soil, these valleys are good for farming.

The climate of Western Montana is different from that of the rest of the state because of its **heavy precipitation**, with an average of 15-23 inches each year. Storms from the Pacific Ocean bring their moisture to the western part of the state, where they are stopped by the mountains and release the moisture in the form of rain or snow.

Due to its heavy precipitation, the Western Region of Montana has much water in the form of **lakes, rivers and streams**. These bodies of water are important for farming, ranching, and recreation - fishing, boating, and whitewater rafting.

Also because of the plentiful rainfall, the hills and mountains of the Western Region are covered with **many trees**. Most of these trees are evergreens - spruce, larch, fir, and pine. In the valleys and along the rivers are found hardwood trees which change color in the fall - cottonwood, aspen, poplar, box elder, ash, elm, and willow. Logging is an important industry in the Western Region because of the abundance of timber. Most of the valleys were once covered with trees, but most of them have been logged to provide land for farming.

The Western Region of Montana is also known for its abundance of animals. In addition to the many **mule and whitetail deer**, there are **big game animals** such as elk, moose, grizzly and black bear, mountain lion, mountain goats, and bighorn sheep. **Furbearing animals** such as beaver, mink, marten, otter, and fox live in the mountains and near the rivers. The Western Region is also known for the fish in its rivers and streams, especially the **trout and salmon**, famous with fisherman all over the country.

One of the geographical features of the Western Region that had the most importance to the history of Montana was its valuable minerals. **Gold, silver, and copper** were found in large deposits. Mining still goes on in the Western Region today.

The geographical features of the Western Region have directly affected the industries that developed there. From the early fur trapping to the mining of precious metals to the development of the logging industry, the Western Region has depended on its natural resources. More and more, the tourist industry is becoming important to Western Montana because of its geography. The spectacular mountain scenery, fishing, hiking, hunting, and water sports have made Western Montana a popular place for tourists.

Central Region.

The Central Region of Montana is a transition region between the Eastern Region and the Western Region, which means that it has some of the features of both. It also special features of its own.

The most important geographical feature of the Central Region is the **high, rolling prairie**. The prairie is covered by **natural grasses**, which once provided forage for huge herds of buffalo and later on, large herds of cattle.

Mountains can be seen in the Central Region, but instead of being continuous as in the Western Region, they are **isolated mountain ranges**, which are also called "island ranges." This means that each mountain range stands by itself and is not connected to other ranges. They rise between 2,000 and 5,000 feet above the surrounding prairie and can be seen for miles. Some of these ranges are the Crazy Mountains, the Bears Paw Mountains, and the Little Rockies. There are **some trees** on these mountains, but not as many as on the mountains in the Western Region.

The prairie of the Central Region is cut by **eroded river valleys**. These are places where rivers have eaten away the dirt and rock from the high prairie. Flat-topped hills known as **buttes**, which are also formed by erosion, rise up above the prairie.

The Central Region of Montana is **semi-arid**. This means that the annual precipitation is low, about 14-15 inches a year. There is more rain in the mountains, but still not as much as in the Western Region. In addition, it is very windy, and the winds speed evaporation, making it even drier. A big problem for farmers is the **hailstorms** which can ruin crops during the summer.

Another occurrence in the Central Region are the **Chinook winds**. These are warm winds that blow down from the Rockies in the winter, causing the temperature to rise very rapidly.

The Central Region has rich deposits of fossil fuels - **natural gas, oil, and coal**.

Much wildlife lives on the grass covered prairie. Bird hunting is a popular sport because of the abundance of game birds such as **pheasant**. **Mule and whitetail deer** and **antelope** also thrive on the prairie. Because of the natural forage, the Central Region was home to enormous herds of **buffalo**. The rivers in the Central Region are

larger than in the Western Region, and hold larger fish such as **northern pike, walleye, and sauger** .

As in the Western Region, the industries of Central Montana developed due mainly to the geographical features of the region. Cattle ranching, development of oil, coal and natural gas deposits, and fishing and hunting are important industries in the Central Region.

Eastern Region.

The Eastern Region of Montana is the largest. It is completely in the part of the United States known as the Great Plains.

The most important geographical feature of the Eastern Region is the **flat prairie**. It stretches for miles and miles, and gives the feeling of the "Big Sky," a famous Montana nickname.

The Eastern Region has two large rivers, the Missouri and the Yellowstone, which form **wide river valleys**.

The Eastern Region is not all flat, however. Erosion has caused some **badlands**, where wind, rain, and the lack of vegetation have carried off the soft soil, leaving hard rock exposed in strange, beautiful shapes.

The climate of the Eastern Region, like the Central Region, is **semi-arid**. The average precipitation is 10-20 inches a year, with some places receiving less than 12 inches of rain a year.

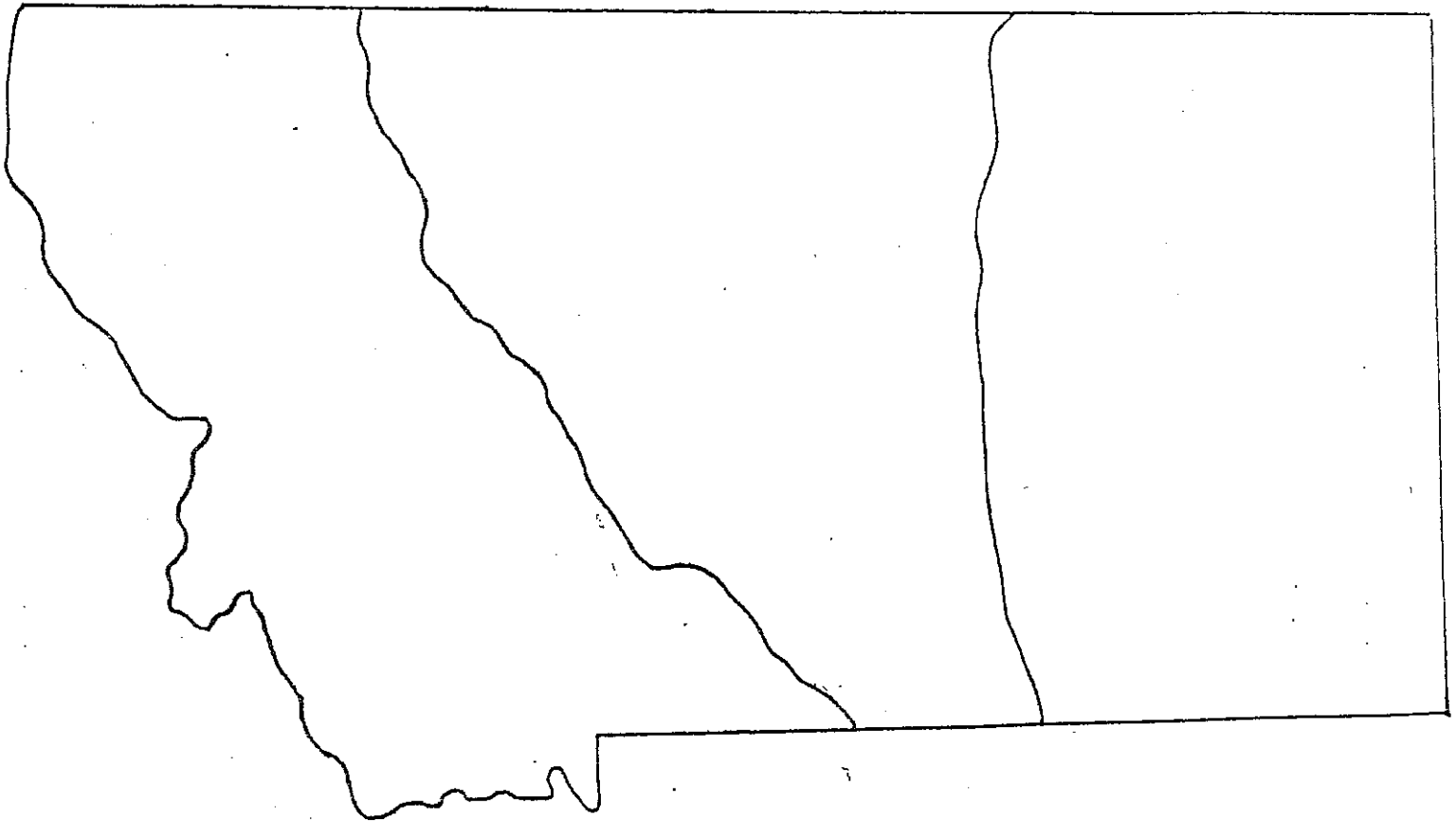
The rangeland of the Eastern Region has **natural grasses**, which once supported huge herds of **buffalo**. **Sagebrush and cactus** are also found on the Eastern prairie.

There are relatively **few trees** in the Eastern Region. The most important trees are the ponderosa pine and the juniper, which live well in the semi-arid climate. Other trees are found only along the rivers.

The most characteristic large animals of the Eastern Region are the **antelope** and **mule and whitetail deer**. Deposits of **natural gas, oil, and coal** are also found there.

Of the three regions of Montana, the Eastern is the most rural and the least populated. As in the Western and the Central, the industries there have developed due to the geographic features. Cattle ranching, wheat farming, and development of fossil fuels are three of the main industries.

Illustrate the different geographical features of each region on the map below.



Rivers of Montana

Missouri River Drainage

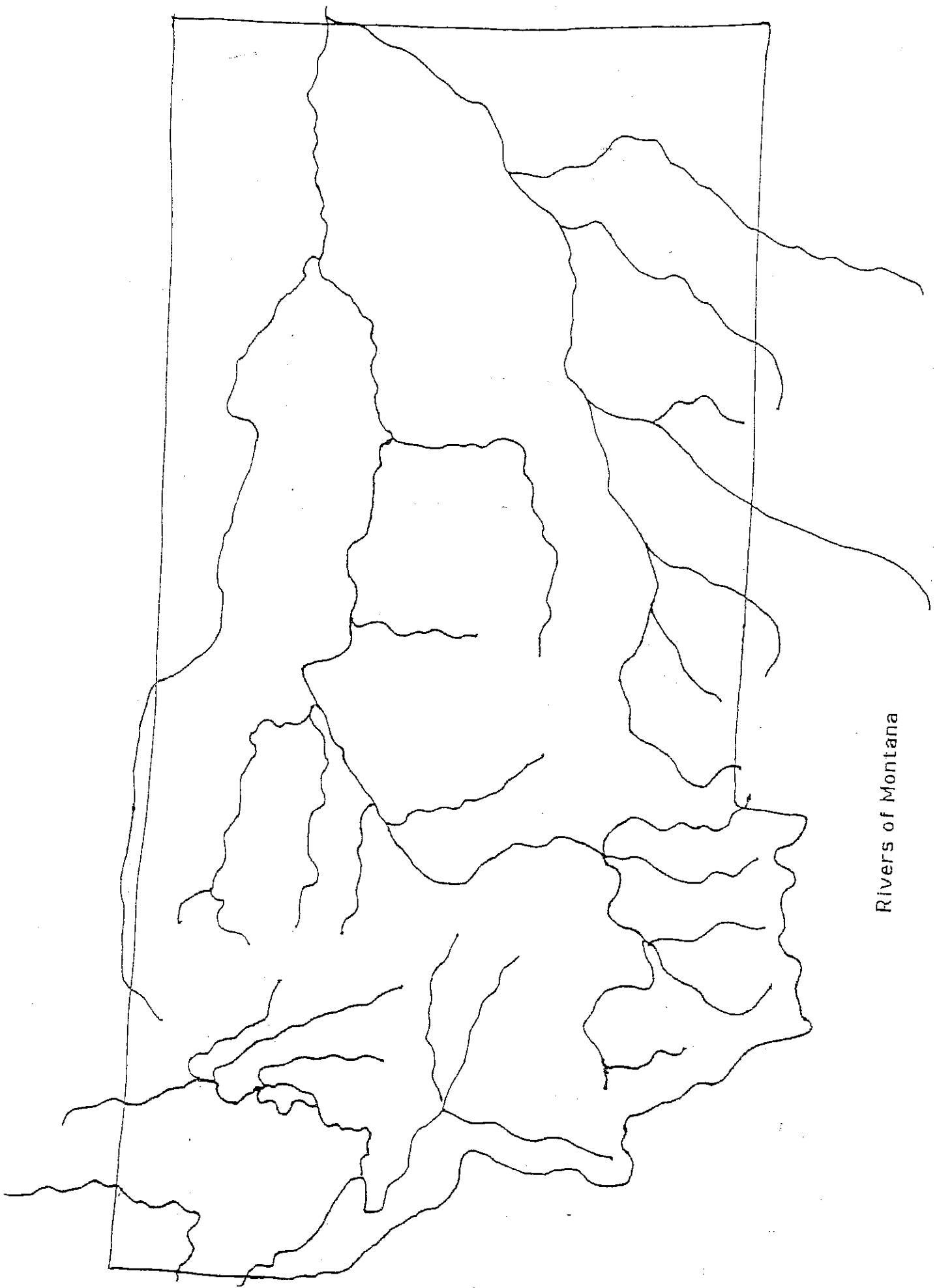
Missouri River
Milk River
Musselshell River
Judith River
Marias River
Teton River
Sun River
Smith River
Gallatin River
Madison River
Jefferson River
Big Hole River
Beaverhead River
Ruby River

Yellowstone River Drainage

Yellowstone River
Powder River
Tongue River
Bighorn River
Little Bighorn River
Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone River
Stillwater River

Columbia River Drainage

Clark Fork of the Columbia River
Bitterroot River
Blackfoot River
Flathead River
North Fork of the Flathead River
Middle Fork of the Flathead River
South Fork of the Flathead River
Swan River
Kootenai River



Rivers of Montana

Montana Mountain Ranges

Bitterroot	Centennial
Garnet	Snowcrest
Beaverhead	Bighorn
Swan	Little Snowy
Flathead	Salish
Mission	Pintlar
Madison	Butte Highlands
Gallatin	Bear Paw
Little Rockies	Crazy
Little Belt	Big Belt
Absaroka	Beartooth
Pryor	Big Snowy
Judith	Cabinet
Bridger	Sapphire
Pioneer	Castle
Gravelly	Ruby
Tobacco Root	Lewis
Purcell	Whitefish
Highwood	Sweetgrass Hills

