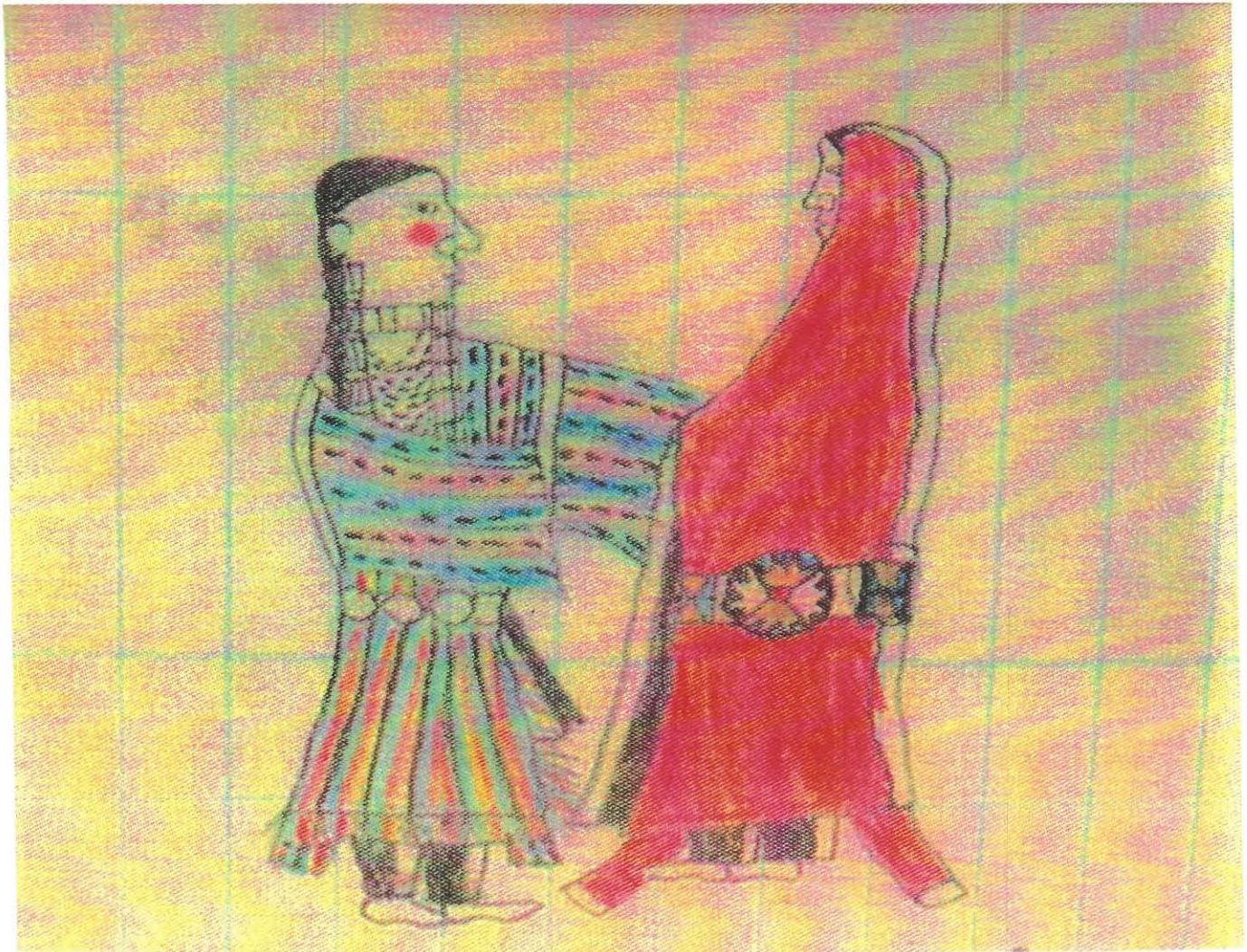


A SOUTHERN CHEYENNE COURTING LEDGER
FROM DARLINGTON, AGENCY, I. T., Ca. 1887

An Analysis for the Brant Mackley Gallery, Hummelstown, Pennsylvania

by Mike Cowdrey

July, 2005



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Introductory Note

For purposes of discussion the pages of this ledger have been numbered from front to back, beginning with the inside front cover, and concluding with the inside back flyleaf. In each of the accompanying Plates, the lower of the two pages is the first in numerical sequence. It is important to understand, however, that the Cheyenne artist did not, necessarily enter the drawings in that order.

In 84 numbered sheets, there are 67 pages containing some drawing; 17 sheets are blank ---11, 19, 22, 26, 27, 31, 35, 37, 42, 43, 48, 53, 59, 61, 70, 73 & 76. In only three instances does the composition include two pages: 9-10, 29-30 & 63-64.

Tribal Attribution

Various features of the figures in these drawings identify the artist as a member of the Cheyenne tribe: the long, trailing breech cloths worn by most male figures are a Cheyenne, pictographic "signature" (see Cowdrey, 1999: 6; Grinnell, 1923, I: 221).

The ornately decorated tipi shown on Page 5 is of a type produced only by the Cheyenne tribe, and their Arapaho allies---see the discussion for Page 5, and compare Figures 19 & 20.

The beaded lizard amulet depicted on Page 63 is a nearly exact duplicate of an actual amulet which belonged to a leading Cheyenne chief---compare Figure 8. The several, beaded blanket strips depicted in this ledger---Pages 5, 21, 41, 52 & 67---all display typical Cheyenne designs. Compare, for example, the beaded strips on Pages 5, 52 & 67 with the blanket strip worn by the Southern Cheyenne chief Whirlwind, in Cowdrey, 1999: Figures 58 a & b.

The artist, then, was a member of the Cheyenne tribe. Comparison of individual name glyphs throughout the ledger with census lists for the Northern Cheyenne tribe (Buecker and Paul, 1994), and Southern Cheyenne tribe (Oklahoma Historical Society, microfilm in author's possession), demonstrates significant matches only among the southern group. The artist, therefore, was a Southern Cheyenne.

Dating the Drawings

A significant aspect of this collection is that unlike any of the other, known Cheyenne ledger books, there are no depictions of either intertribal conflict, or battles with U.S. soldiers. That is direct evidence of two things: (1) the period during which the drawings were made was subsequent to the end of tribal warfare, which for the Southern Cheyennes occurred in 1875; and (2) the artist was too young at that date to have acquired any battle experience or honors, else---like all other Cheyenne artists---displaying these would have been his primary concern. The artist, therefore, would have been born not long before 1870. He was a child during the Red River War of 1874-75, after which the Southern Cheyennes were confined to their reservation near Darlington Agency, Indian Territory, now Oklahoma.

Courting---a young man's preoccupation---is the major topic of concern to this artist. The adolescent pranks portrayed (Pages 18, 36 & 41) also suggest that he likely was a teenager---say, in the age range of sixteen to twenty years old. On the basis of this indirect evidence, therefore, the drawings were likely created in the period ca. 1886-1890.

An "earliest" date for the collection is established on Page 29, by the very accurate depiction of an 1884-model Springfield "trapdoor" carbine---compare Figures 1, 2 & 3. Unlike earlier Springfields, the 1884 model had the added feature of a ring on the front of the trigger guard for attachment of a shoulder sling (Figure 2). This ring is shown quite carefully in the drawing on Page 29. These drawings, therefore, must be subsequent to 1884, and earlier than ca. 1890. A reasonably close date for the collection, then, is ca. 1887.

The Fort Reno Scouts

1885 saw the initiation of a very significant change for the Southern Cheyennes. After a decade of enforced idleness, Cheyenne men were offered the opportunity to enlist as Scouts for the Army units (infantry and cavalry) assigned to Fort Reno, adjacent to Darlington Agency, I.T. They wore cavalry uniforms, were paid the same wages as enlisted soldiers, with additional allotments if they provided their own horse. Many of the prominent war leaders of the 1870's immediately enlisted to be members of this Scout detachment (Figure 3). Their families were allowed to accompany them, and formed a separate tipi encampment beside Fort Reno (see the brief histories in Green, 1992: 51-52; and Bates, 2000: 26-28). Other Cheyenne and Arapaho Scout units were assigned to Fort Supply, I.T., and Fort Elliott, Texas. These other units, however, were far from the reservation, and did not have a lot of young Cheyenne women located conveniently nearby for evening socializing. The non-stop dating depicted in this ledger denotes that it must have been created at or near Darlington Agency. The artist's possible association with the Fort Reno Scout encampment will be discussed in connection with the drawings on Page 2.

The Artist

Often, Cheyenne ledgers were cooperative enterprises, in the nature of an autograph album, with several artists contributing drawings. In this case, however, the general style remains uniform throughout the collection. I conclude, therefore, that a single individual created all drawings in this small ledger. Direct and indirect evidence for his quirks of personality, possible family connections, and clues to his identity will be explored in the following discussions of individual drawings.

The Drawings: Page 1

The penciled notation "25 cents" along the edge of the inside front cover denotes the price paid for this small notebook. Two "practice", or incomplete figures appear on the sheet. At left is an Indian woman---identifiable from the lower side gussets on her dress visible below the enwrapping blanket---compare Pages 21 & 67. The left profile of a Whiteman appears at bottom center.

Page 2

The outside, front flyleaf has three, remarkably well drawn figures of military men undoubtedly serving at Fort Reno. At far left is a captain or major---denoted by his long-tailed dress coat, with gilt insignia on the collar. His status as an infantry officer is indicated by the black stripe along the outer seam of his trousers. The man's remarkably long nose appears to have been the reason he was portrayed. The next figure represents a cavalry lieutenant (single shoulder bar, and yellow stripe on trousers). The third figure portrays a cavalry corporal (single chevron on sleeve, yellow stripe on trousers), likely the lieutenant's "striker", or personal aide. Pages 4 & 78 display other depictions of military figures.

These carefully rendered portraits suggest close---perhaps even personal---acquaintance with the men depicted. In turn, this suggests that the artist may have been living in the camp of Indian Scout families attached to Fort Reno. The absence of any autobiographical portrayals of men in Scout uniform, however, denotes that the artist, himself, could not have been a scout. If he had been an older man---say, a father or uncle of one of the Scouts---there would be depictions of his inter-tribal war exploits. As these are lacking also, the artist can only have been a son, younger brother or cousin of one or more of the Scouts. This conclusion is rather strengthened by all of the courting vignettes.

The cavalry officer commanding the Cheyenne Scout detachment at Fort Reno in 1885-87 was Lieutenant Sedgewick "Squid" Rice. He continued serving with the Scout unit when it was later commanded by Captain Homer Wheeler. Rice may be the lieutenant portrayed here. Compare the remarkable similarity of the figures in this drawing, and on Pages 4 & 78, to the sergeant in "dress blues" shown in the 1891 photograph in Figure 18.

Another man some distance away is in the act of killing the dancer by shooting him through the back with a rifle. Blood issuing from the victim's mouth indicates that his lungs have been pierced. Whether this was an accidental or intentional killing cannot be certainly discerned from the drawing. This unusual scene is undoubtedly based in reality. If an historical description of this incident could be located, in one of the reports for Darlington Agency or Fort Reno, that would be the best means for precisely dating this ledger.

Page 83

The artist's dancing outfit includes an otter fur turban with silver conchos on the cap, red and blue silk ribbons along the pendant tail, and an affixed eagle feather. At the right is a red-dyed roach headdress with another eagle feather, and long pendants of blue and red silk ribbon. This roach would be worn atop the turban, affixed to the dancer's scalp lock.

Between the turban and roach, the two, dark, elliptical objects represent a pair of otter fur knee bands decorated with small silver conchos, or perhaps circular mirrors. Above these is a red bandolier strung with black dewclaw rattles.

The long, black rectangle to the left represents one of a pair of man's leggings of dark blue wool cloth, decorated with appliqued red and blue ribbons. The red, forked pendant at the knee is of the style of legging shown on Page 75.

At upper left is a neck suspension made of a pair of conch shell discs connected by several strands of brass beads. These actually would form a loop---which was worn over the back of the neck, with the shells hanging on the chest---but only the ends are shown.

Page 84

Among several unfinished, or practice heads is another courting scene which includes two, unusual attempts to depict sound. Conversation is clearly passing between the man and woman; while her unhappy dog barks at the man, and is ignored. This motif of an intrusive dog is fairly common in Plains Indian depictions of courting.

Conclusion

This ledger is significant for several reasons. First, it is the only book of Cheyenne drawings known to the author which is devoted solely to courting scenes. Second, while some art historians have suggested that the ledger art genre lapsed with the generation of men who had been active warriors, this collection is direct evidence that the tradition had not only been taken up by the subsequent generation, but was avidly being pursued more than a decade after the beginning of the reservation experience.

By what they do not depict, the drawings also document the changes imposed on the traditional lives of the Cheyenne people: not only are there no scenes of warfare, but neither are there scenes of hunting, because most wild animals had been exterminated on

the reservation. The young man who made these drawings, heir to a hunting tradition thousands of years old, may never have had the opportunity to hunt anything in his life. There are no scenes of traditional religious ceremonies, because these were actively being suppressed by government and religious authorities. Very little had been left for Cheyenne males to fill up their days, except the inconsequential but ever-beguiling pursuit of the opposite sex.

Captain Homer Wheeler, who succeeded Sedgewick Rice in command of the Fort Reno Scouts, recalled how the Cheyennes passed their time:

“It was quite comical to watch the young men and women flirt, as I have often seen them. They dressed up in their very best colored blankets, beaded leggings and moccasins; their hair carefully combed and ornamented, their faces painted with yellow ochre, on each cheek a heart, a star, or a round spot in red, according to their individual tastes” (Wheeler, 1923: 308).

As for the rest of their ancient and irreplaceable culture, as far as Captain Wheeler and the government he represented were concerned...nevermore.

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San Luis Obispo, California
July 2005

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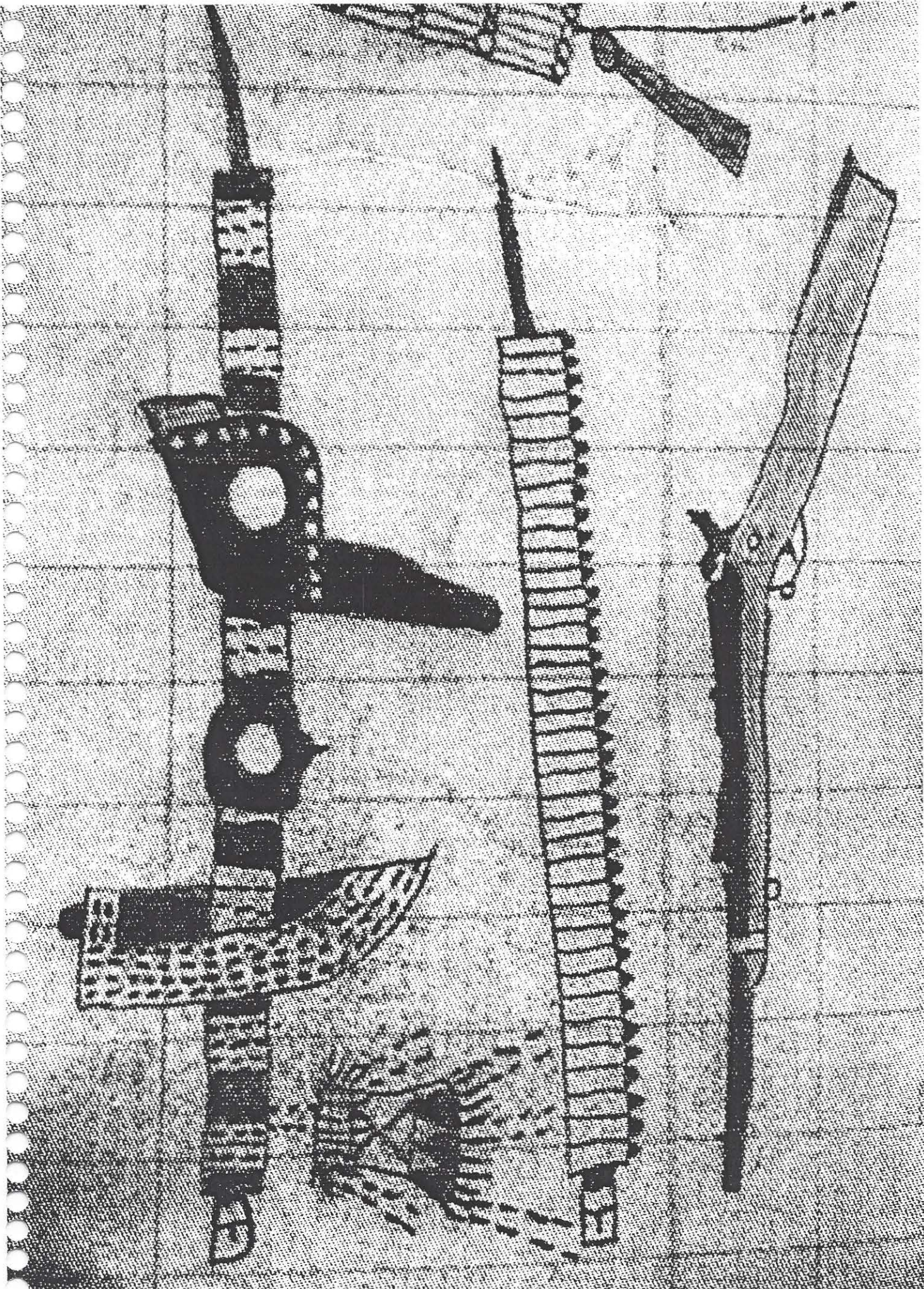


FIGURE 1 Weapons of the artist from page 29, including an 1884-model Springfield "trapdoor" carbine with a ring on the trigger guard for attachment of a shoulder sling.

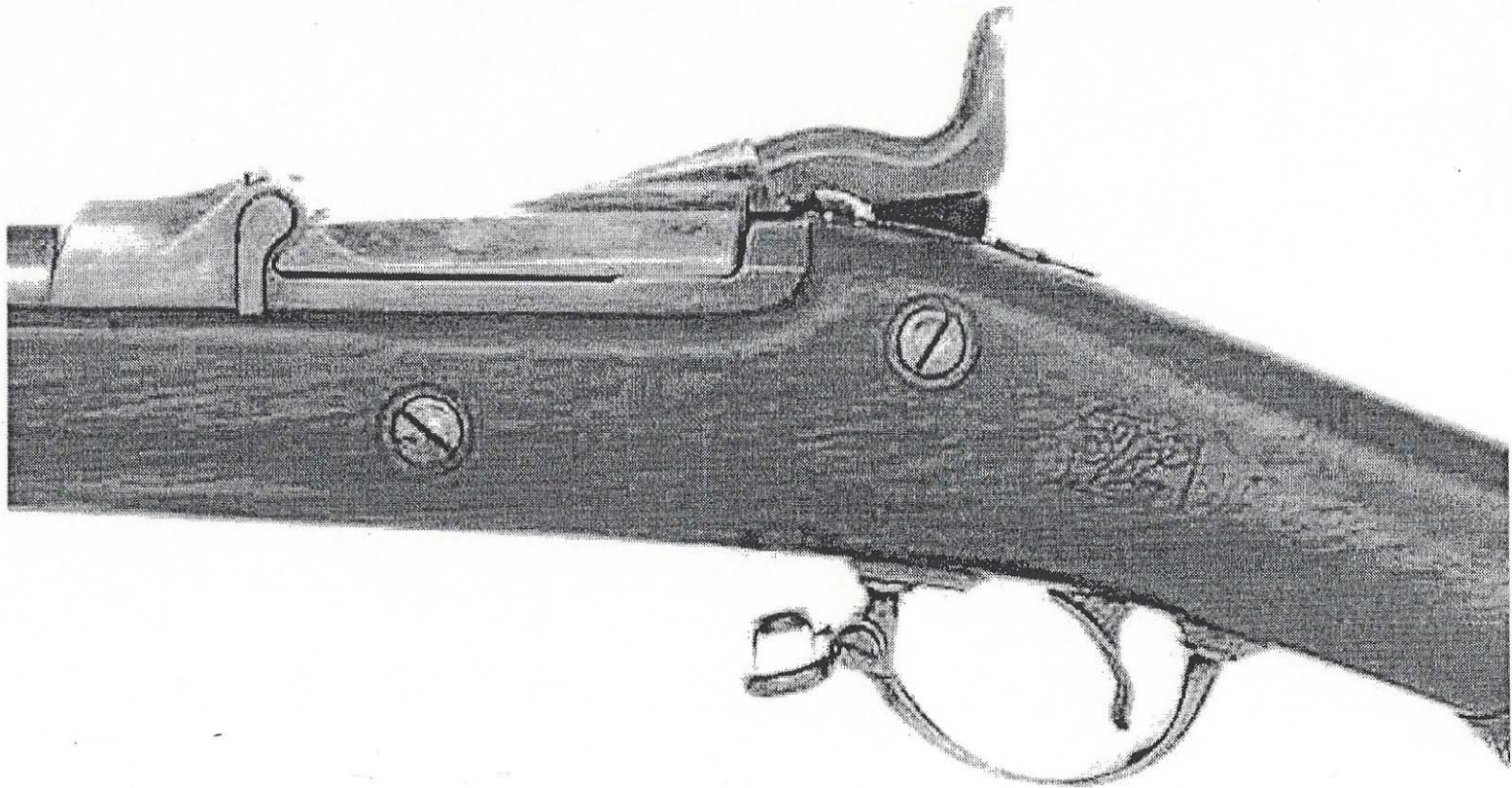
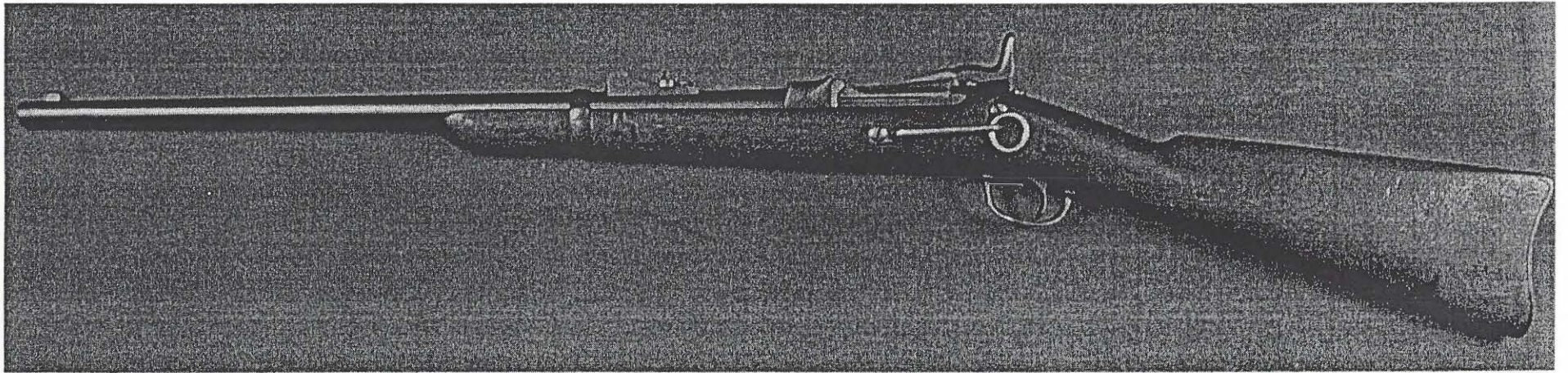


FIGURE 2 (Top) 1879-model Springfield carbine. (Bottom) detail of an 1884-model Springfield carbine, with added ring for sling attachment.

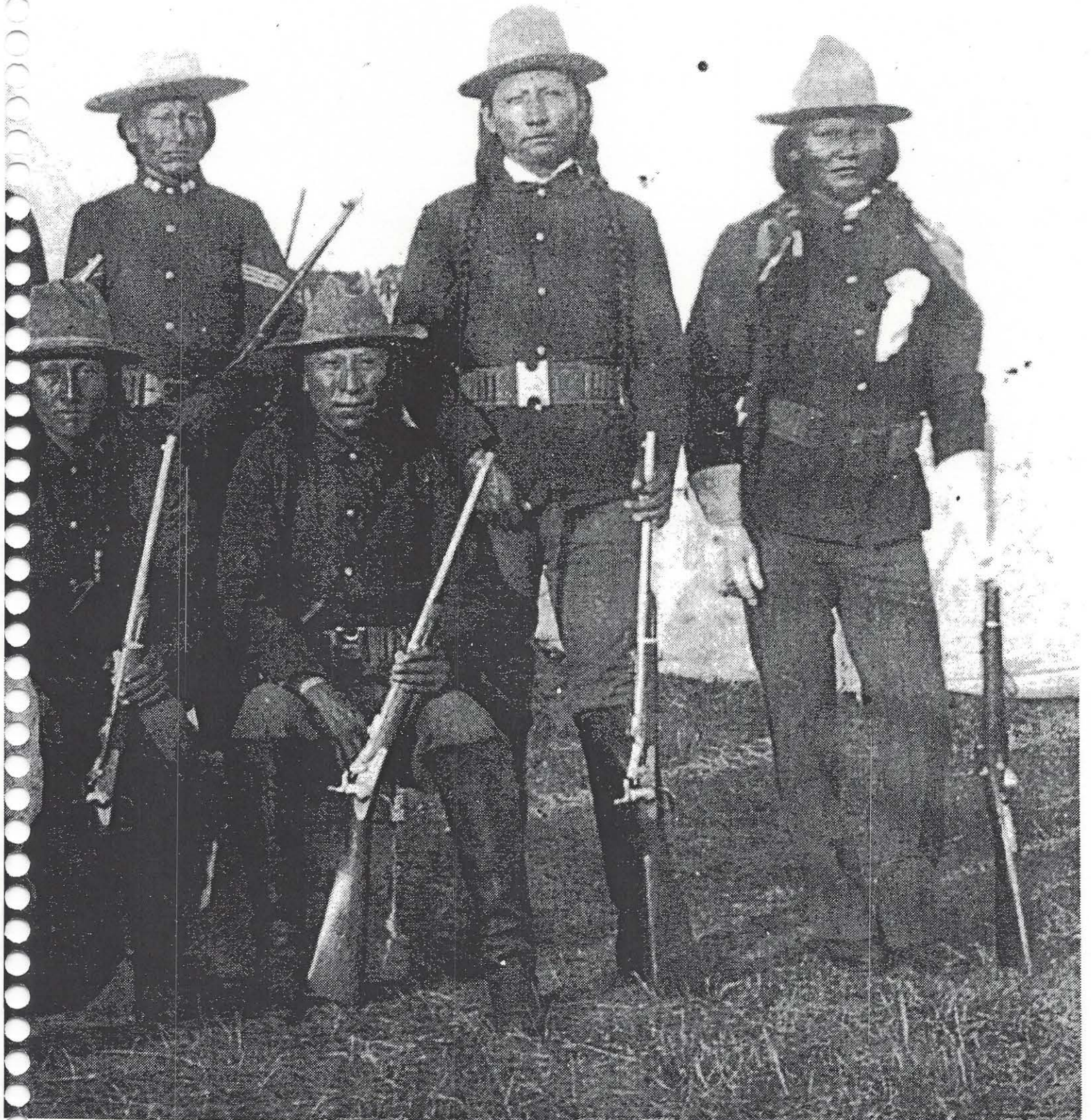


FIGURE 3 Southern Cheyenne Army Scouts at Fort Reno, Indian Territory, 1890. All are armed with 1879-model Springfield carbines. Photo by William S. Prettyman. Oklahoma Historical Society, Neg. # 3366.

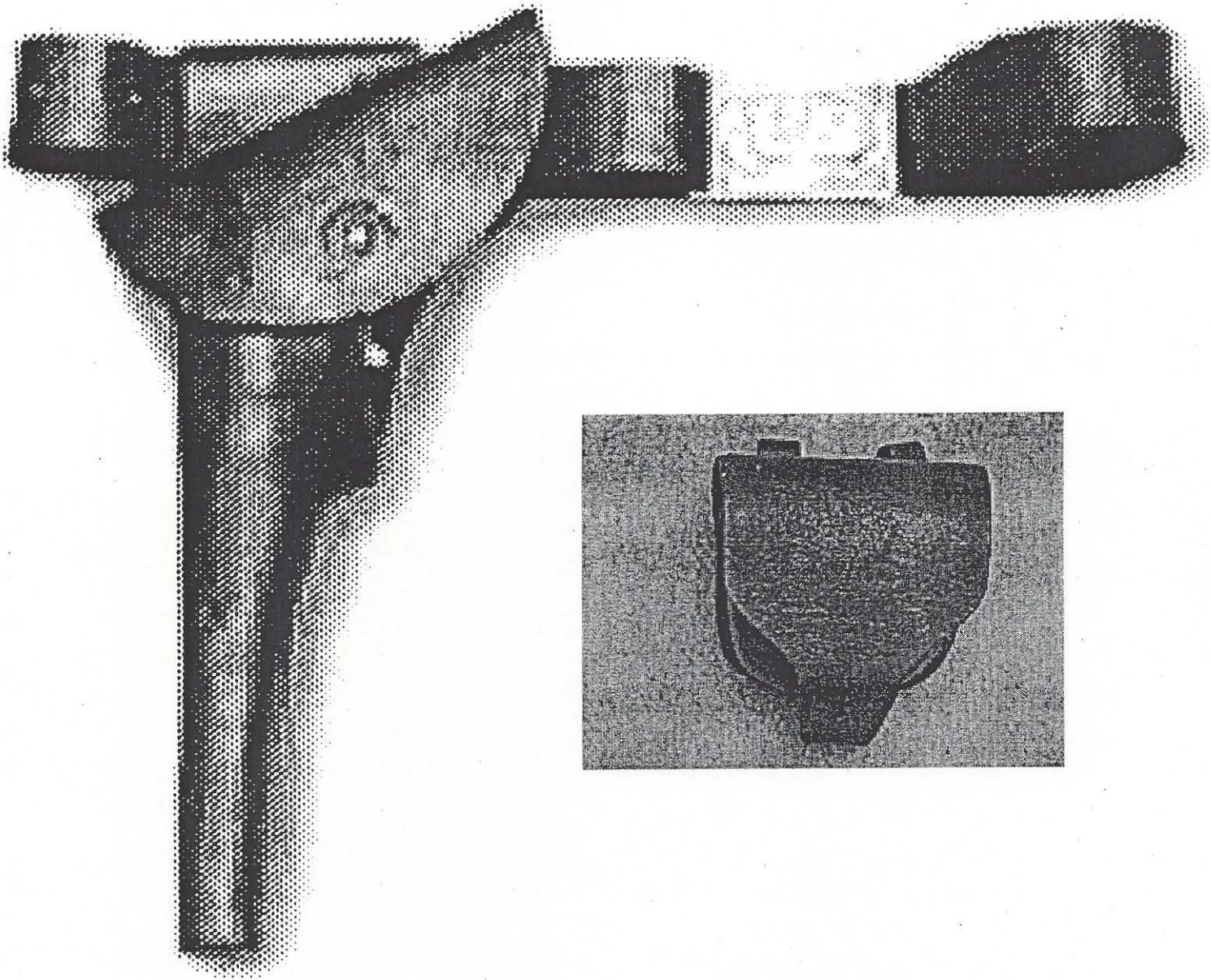


FIGURE 4 (Top) U.S. Army leather belt with leather holster for a Colt Revolver.
(Lower) Civil War-era belt pouch for primer caps to be used with an 1860-model Colt Army revolver.

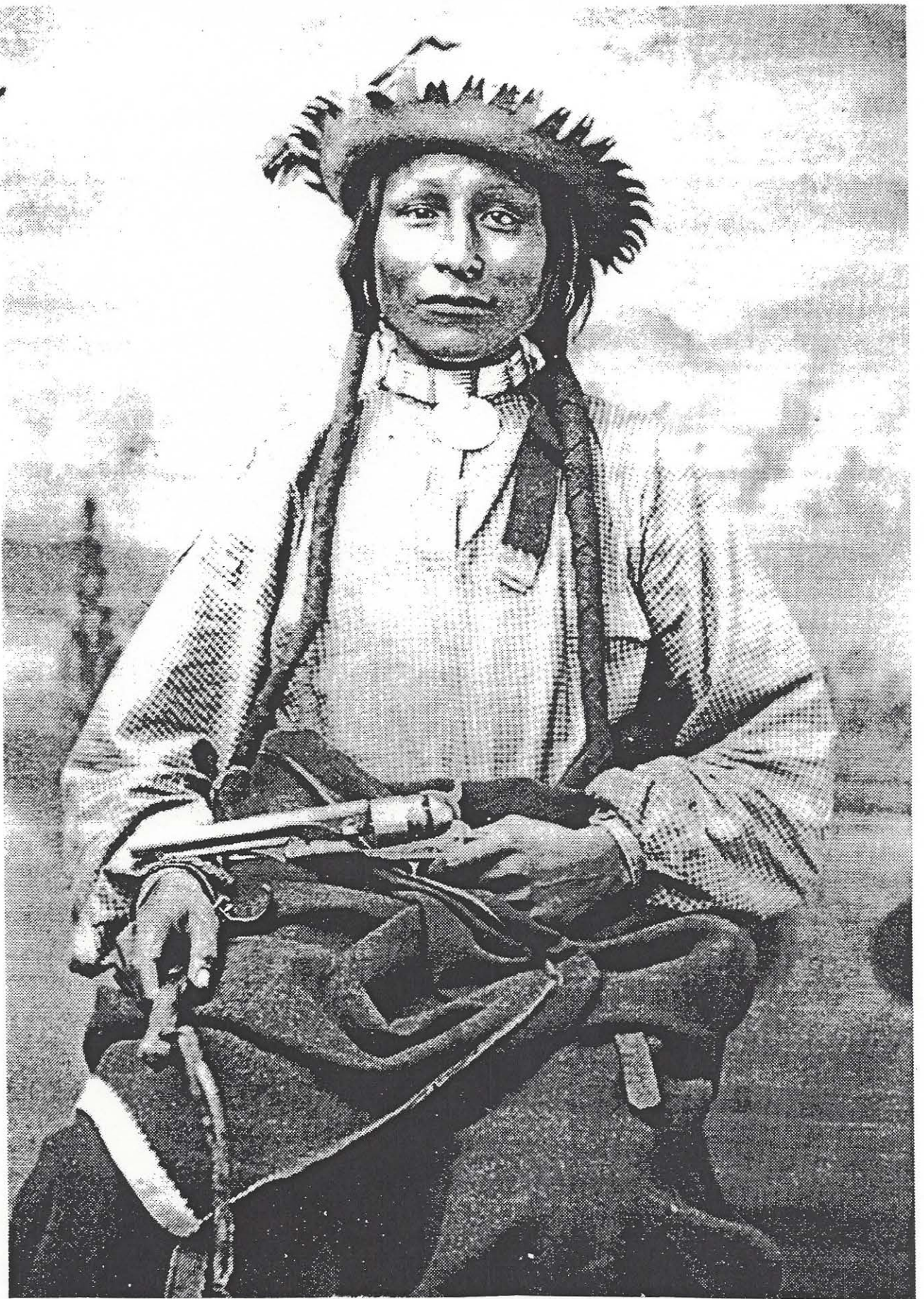


FIGURE 5 Little Wolf, the younger, Northern Cheyenne, holding an 1860-model Colt Army revolver, and wearing a felt hat with the brim “pinked” in a fashion similar to the hat depicted on pages 29 and 63. Photo by David S. Mitchell, 1877. Wyoming Historical Society.

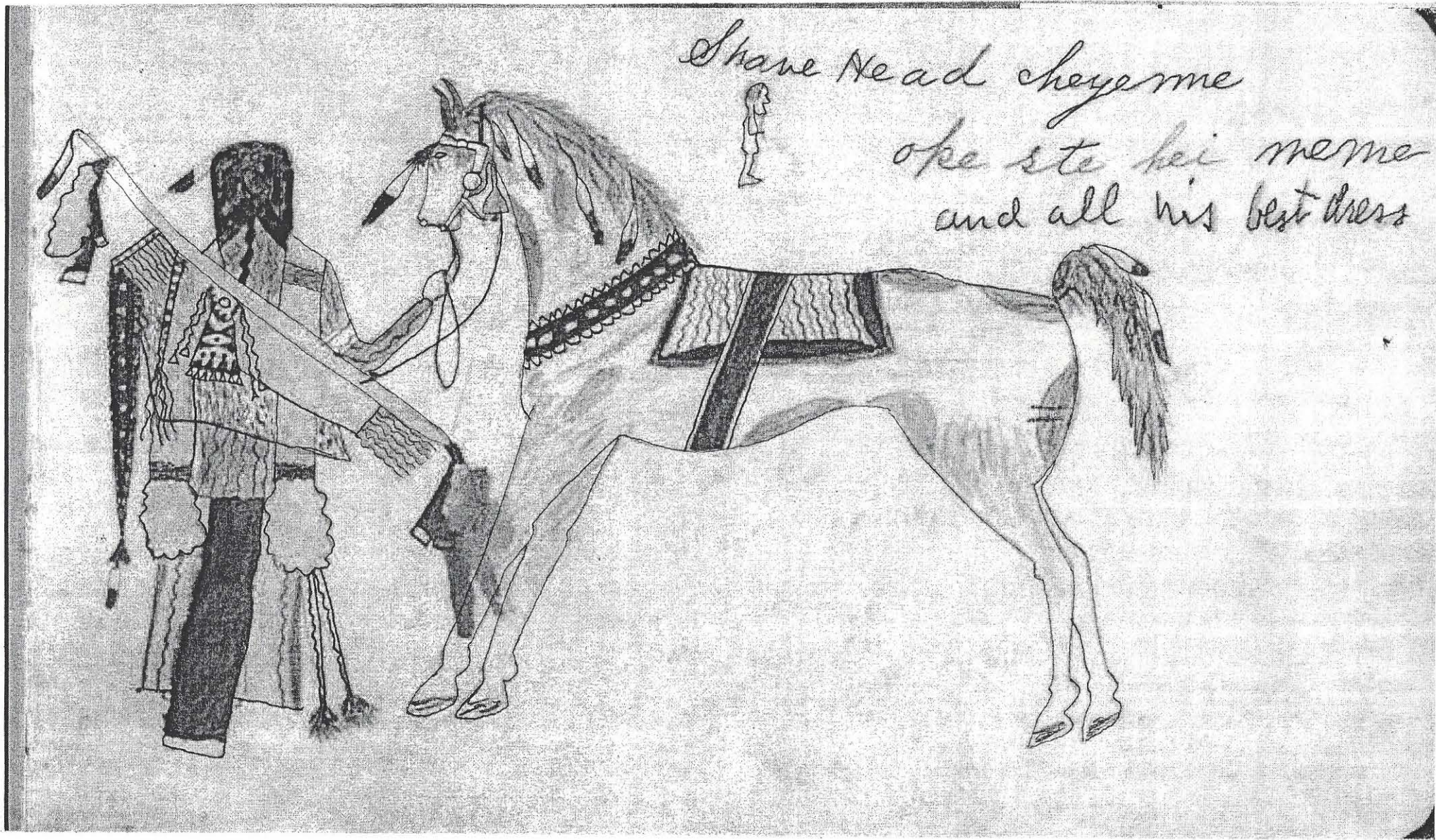


FIGURE 6 "Shave Head, Cheyenne, and all his best dress." Drawing by Shave Head, while a prisoner at Fort Marion, Florida, 1875. Note the strike-a-light bag attached to the quiver, hanging between the suspension straps; and compare with the similar bag attached to the artist's belt, on page 29. Richard Henry Pratt Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

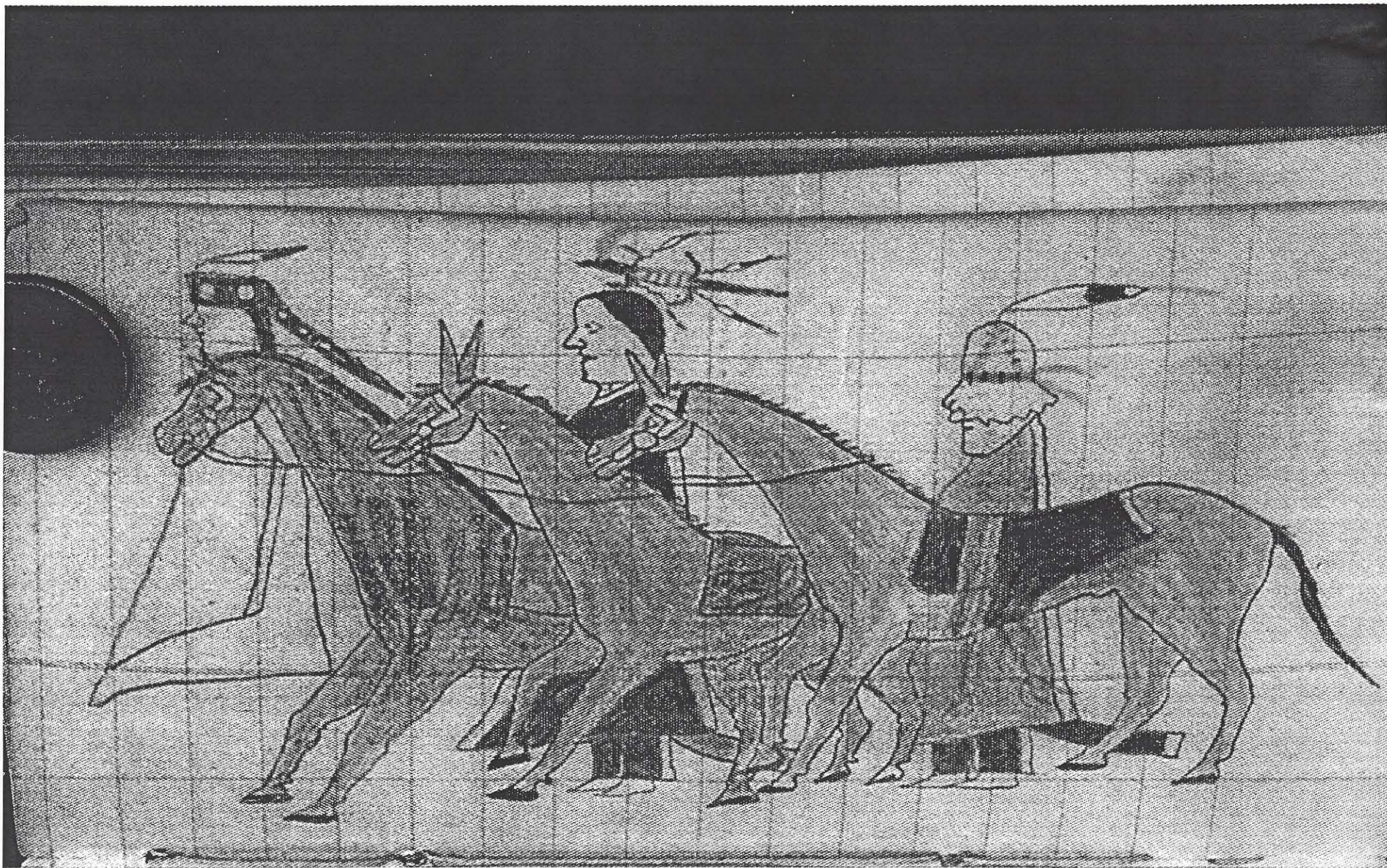


FIGURE 7 Drawing from Page 63, showing suitors---including the artist at right---waiting their turns to woo the young lady depicted on Page 64. Note: the artist's "signature" felt hat, from Page 29---see Figure 10; the lizard war talisman worn by the man at center---compare Figure 8; and the nickel-silver headstalls worn by the horse at left, and the two mules.

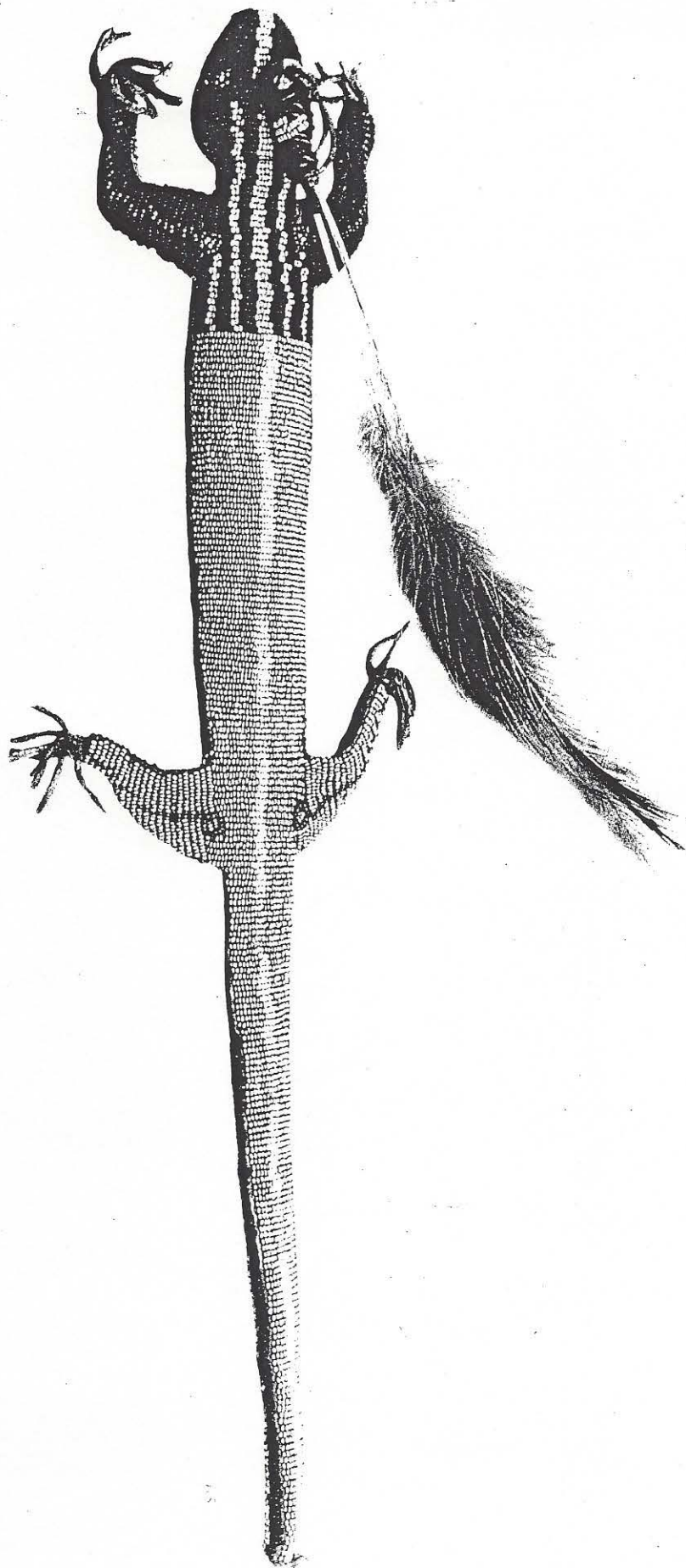


FIGURE 8 Beaded lizard war talisman of Dull Knife, Northern Cheyenne, ca. 1865. Collected at Darlington Agency, Indian Territory, 1885. Daniel B. Dyer Collection, Kansas City Museum, Cat. # 40.607.

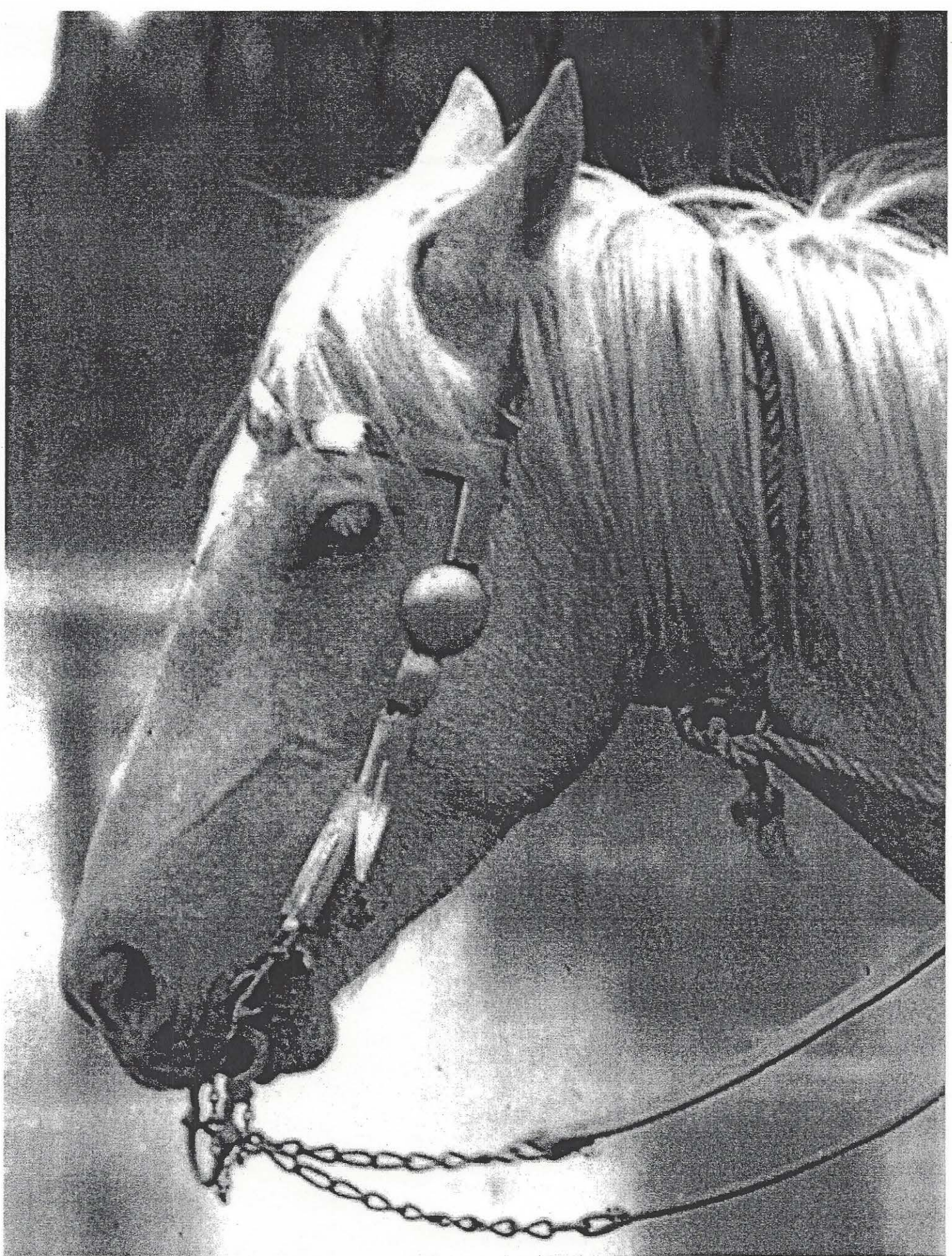


FIGURE 9 Horse "dressed" with a nickel-silver headstall in preparation for war or courting, Kiowa. Detail of photo by James Mooney, 1892.

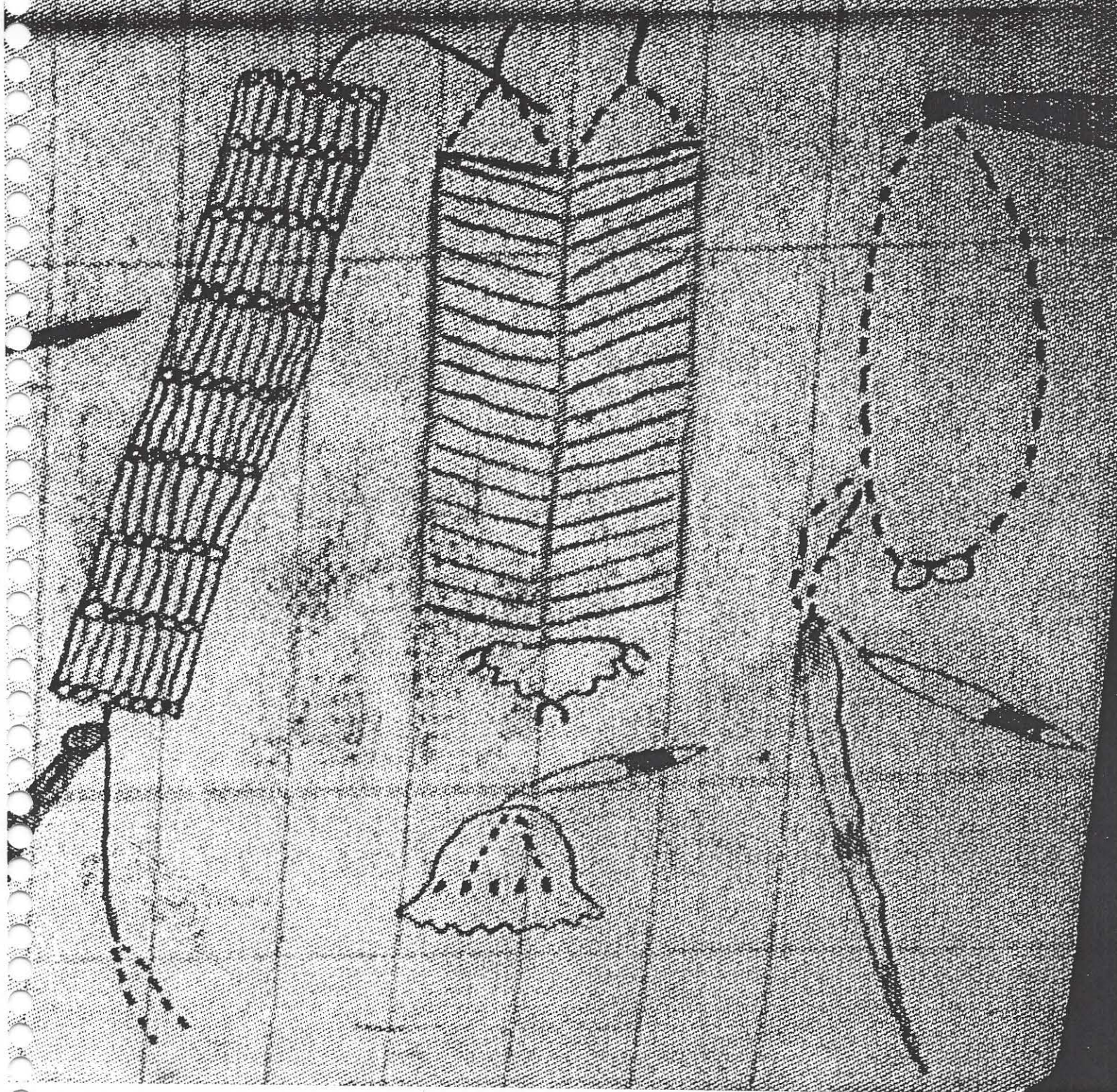


FIGURE 10 Part of the artist's formal clothing, from Page 29, including a dentalia choker (out of scale), at left; a hairpipe breastplate, with nickel-silver pectoral, at center; a bandolier of strung brass beads with pendant cow tail and eagle feather, at right; and a decorated felt hat at bottom.

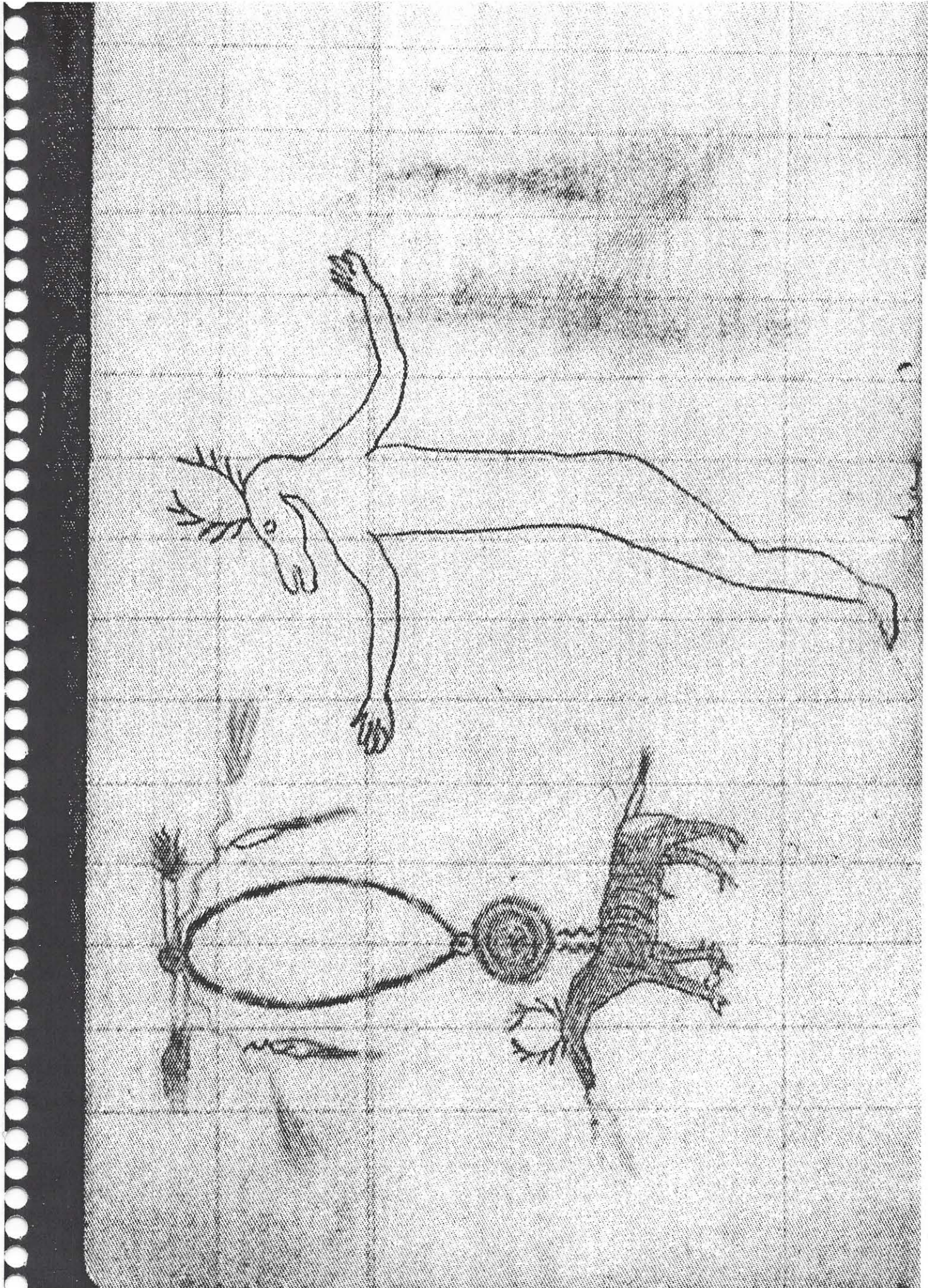


FIGURE 11 A courting necklace, at left, with a figure of a mule deer buck; and at right, an anthropomorphic figure representing the mystical spirit which empowers the effigy. As depicted on Page 80.

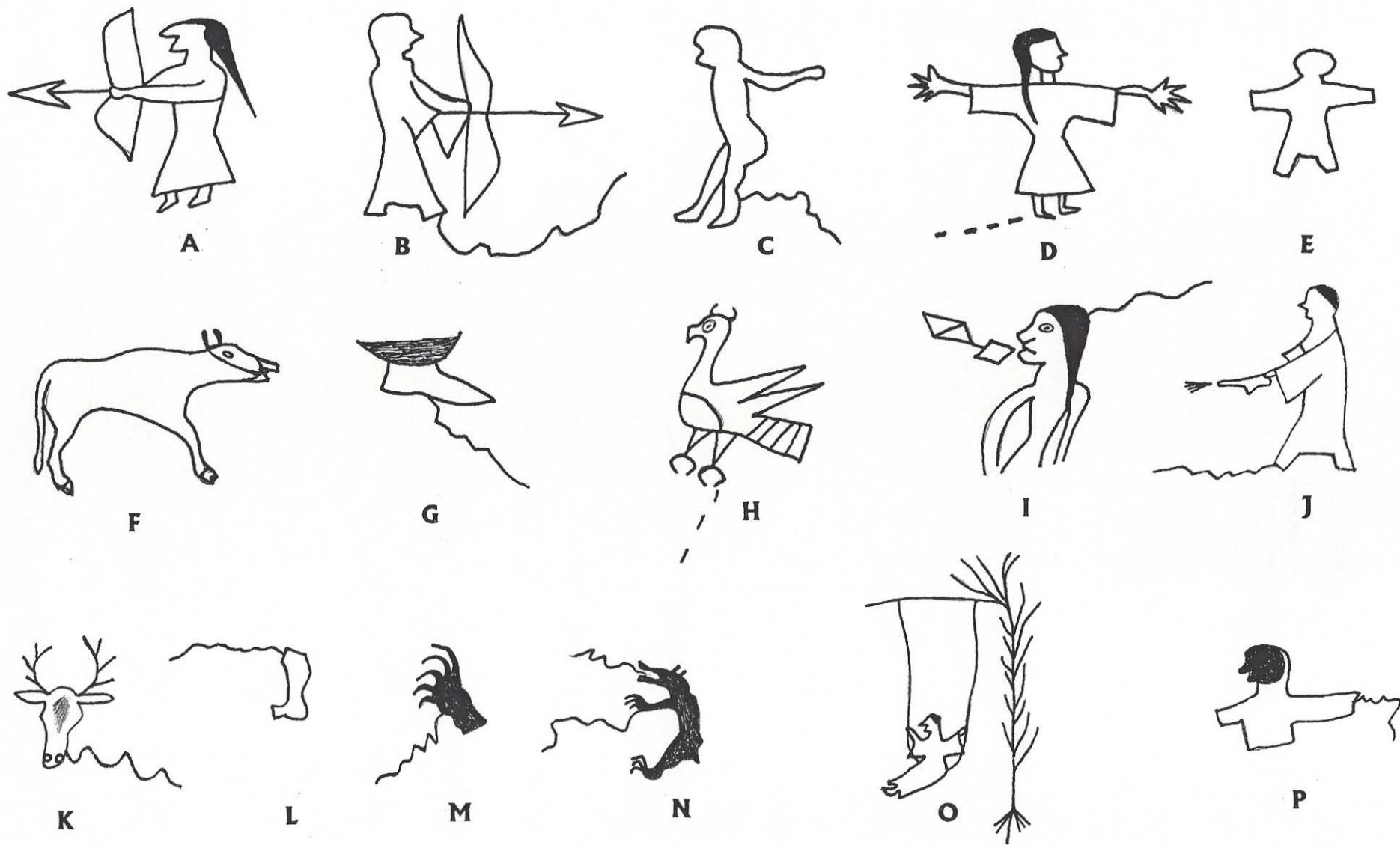


FIGURE 12 Name glyphs of individual Cheyennes portrayed in the ledger: A,B --- "Woman Warrior" (?) C,L --- Calf Woman; D --- Spread Wing Woman; E --- "Yellow ---- Woman" (?); F --- "Striped-face Wolf" (?); G --- Flat Moccasin Woman; H --- "Owl Talon" (?); I --- unknown; J --- Woman Who Shoots" (?); K --- Elk Head; M --- "Bear Paw Woman" (?); N --- Bear Woman; O --- Woman Going Up and Down, or Woman on a Swing; P --- Black-painted Woman.

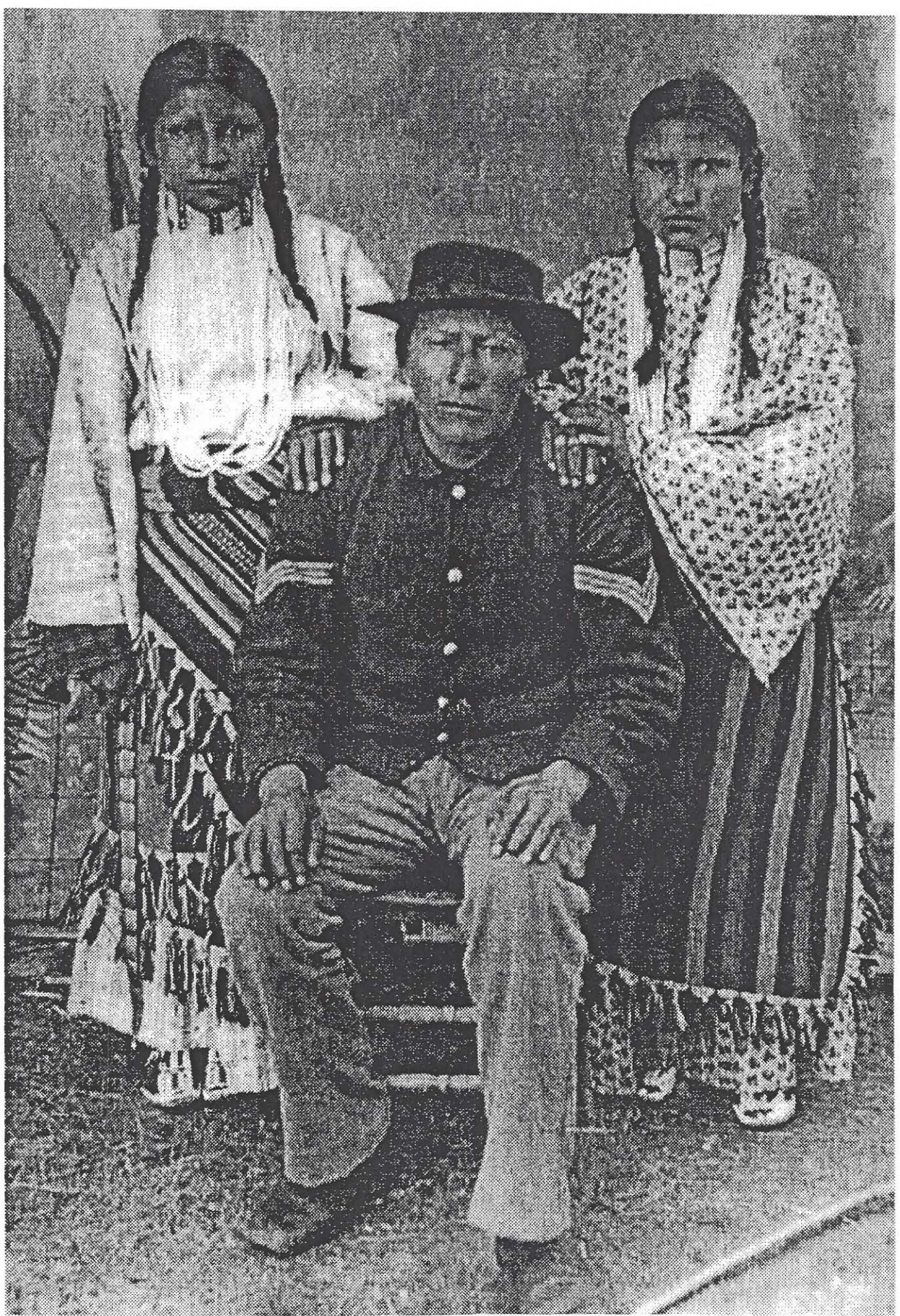


FIGURE 13 "Sergeant Squint Eyes and his Cousins", Southern Cheyennes, late-1880s. Special Collections & Archives, U.S Military Academy Library, West Point, New York.

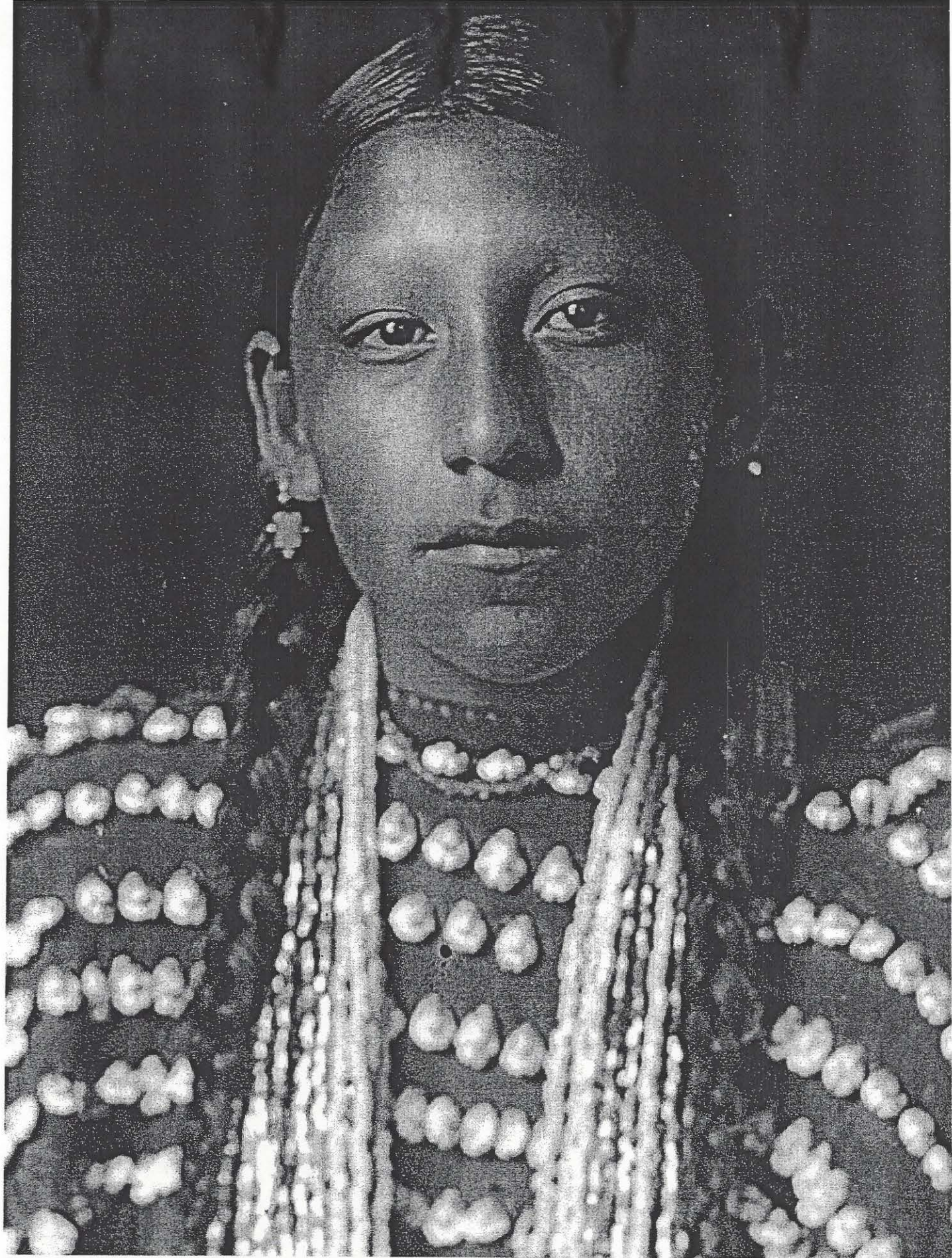


FIGURE 14 *Mi-o-va-su*, a daughter of Crossed Feathers, Southern Cheyenne. Photo by De Lancey W. Gill, 1908. National Anthropological Archives, Neg. # gn-00289a (detail).

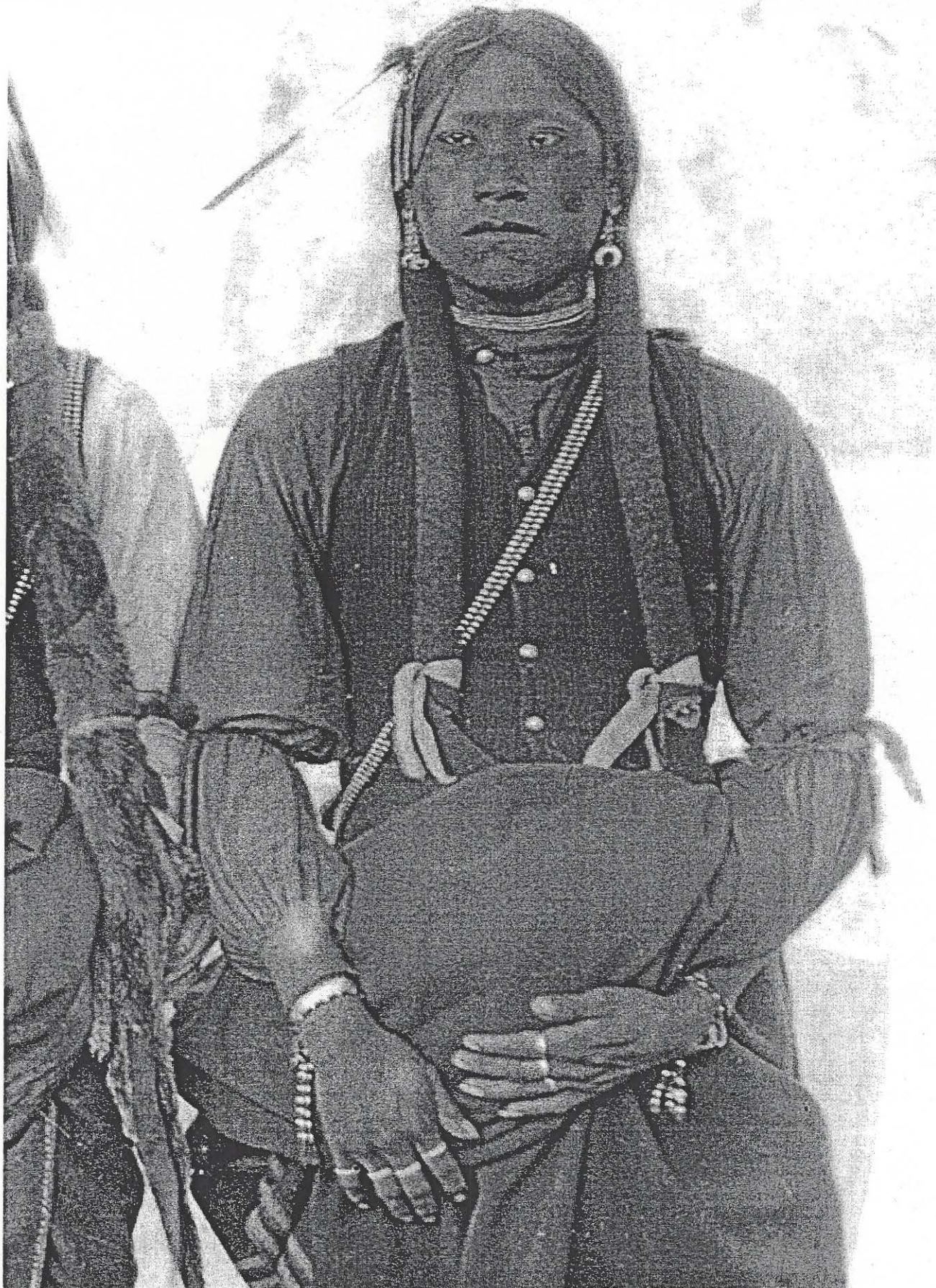


FIGURE 15 A young Comanche man dressed in his finest clothing, with his face painted for courting. Note the bandolier of brass beads. Photo by Hutchins & Lanny, 1891. National Anthropological Archives, Neg. # gn-01776c (detail).



FIGURE 16 Tay-kaun, a young Kiowa man with his face painted for courting in a "star" design similar to the Cheyenne men depicted on pages 33 & 38. Detail of photo by James Mooney, 1892. National Anthropological Archives, Neg. # gn-01433b2.



Figure 17 Inali, a Kiowa teenager with his face painted for courting in a “star” design similar to the Cheyenne men depicted on pages 33 & 38. Detail of photo by James Mooney, 1892. National Anthropological Archives, Neg. # gn-01397a.



FIGURE 18 A Staff Sergeant reviewing Cheyenne and Arapaho Scouts at Fort Reno, I.T., 1891. National Anthropological Archives, Mooney #242.

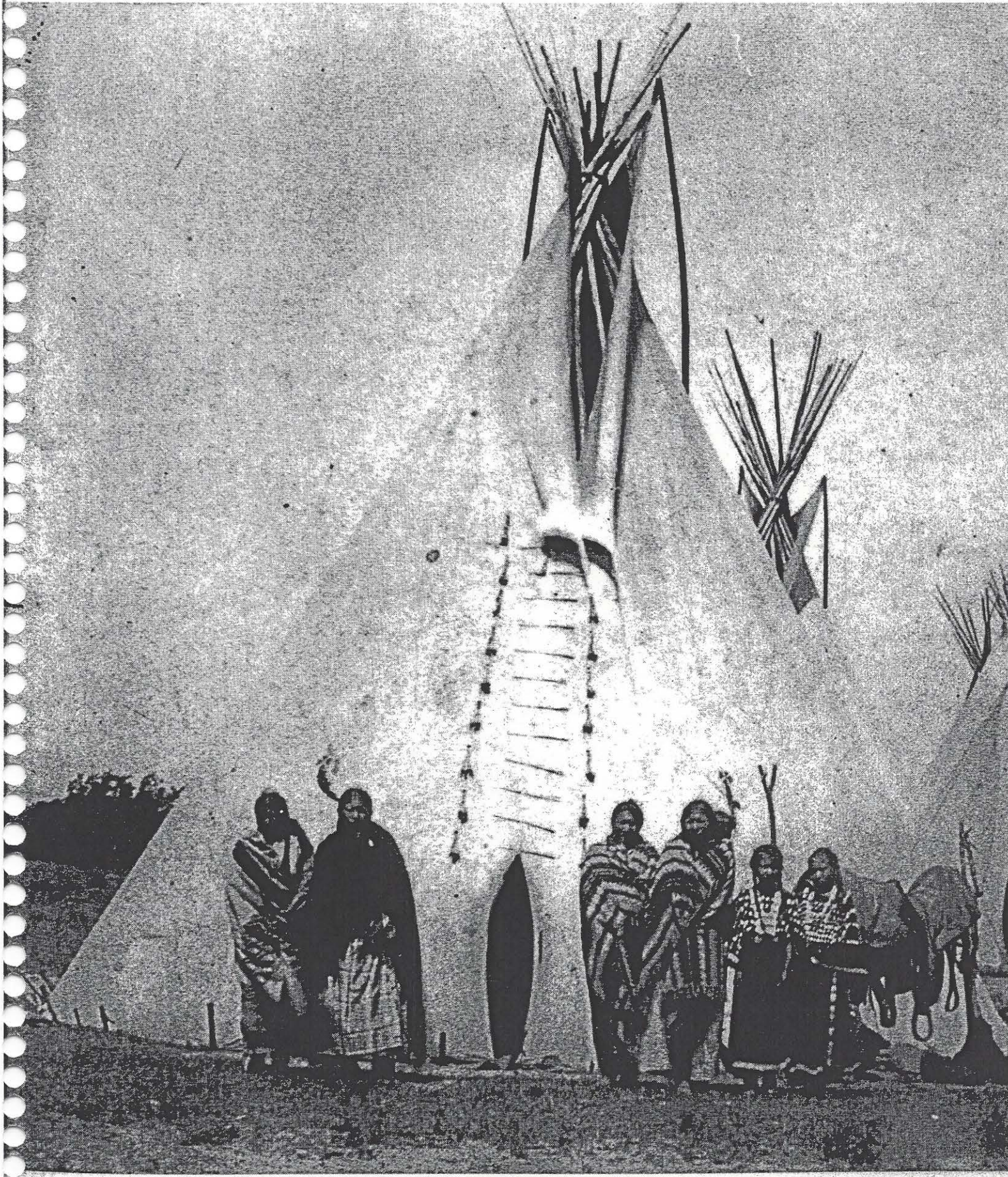
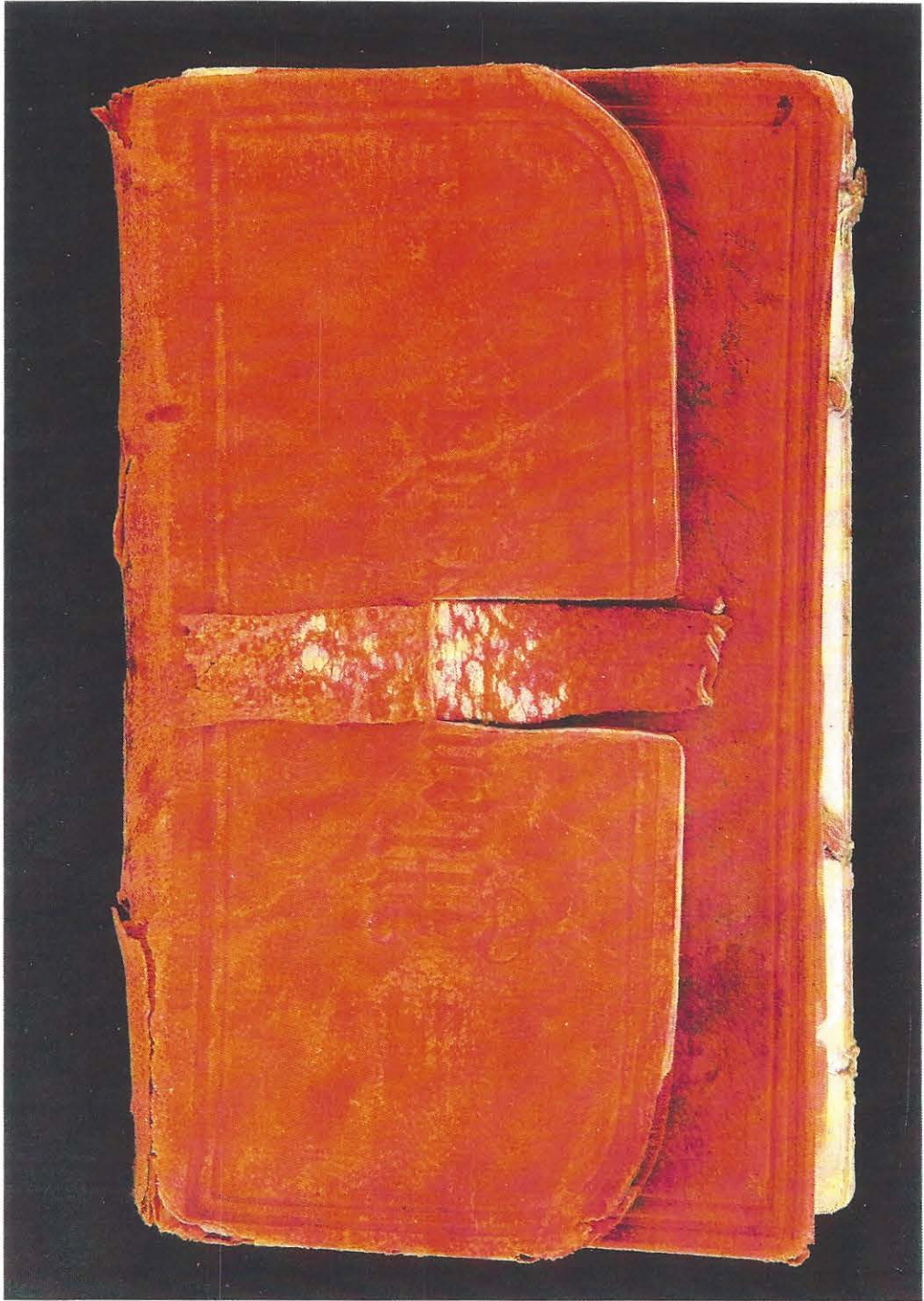


FIGURE 19 "Indian Scout Camp, Fort Reno, I.T.", late-1880s. Photo by J.B. Kingman. Dennis and Rosemary Lessard Photo Collection, Santa Fe, N.M.



FIGURE 20 Cheyenne tipi decorated in the “Stripe Design”, with rows of embroidery
In a panel up the back of the lodge (seen here to the right). Photo by Frank
A. Rinehart, 1989. Denver Public Library, Neg. #X-32288.

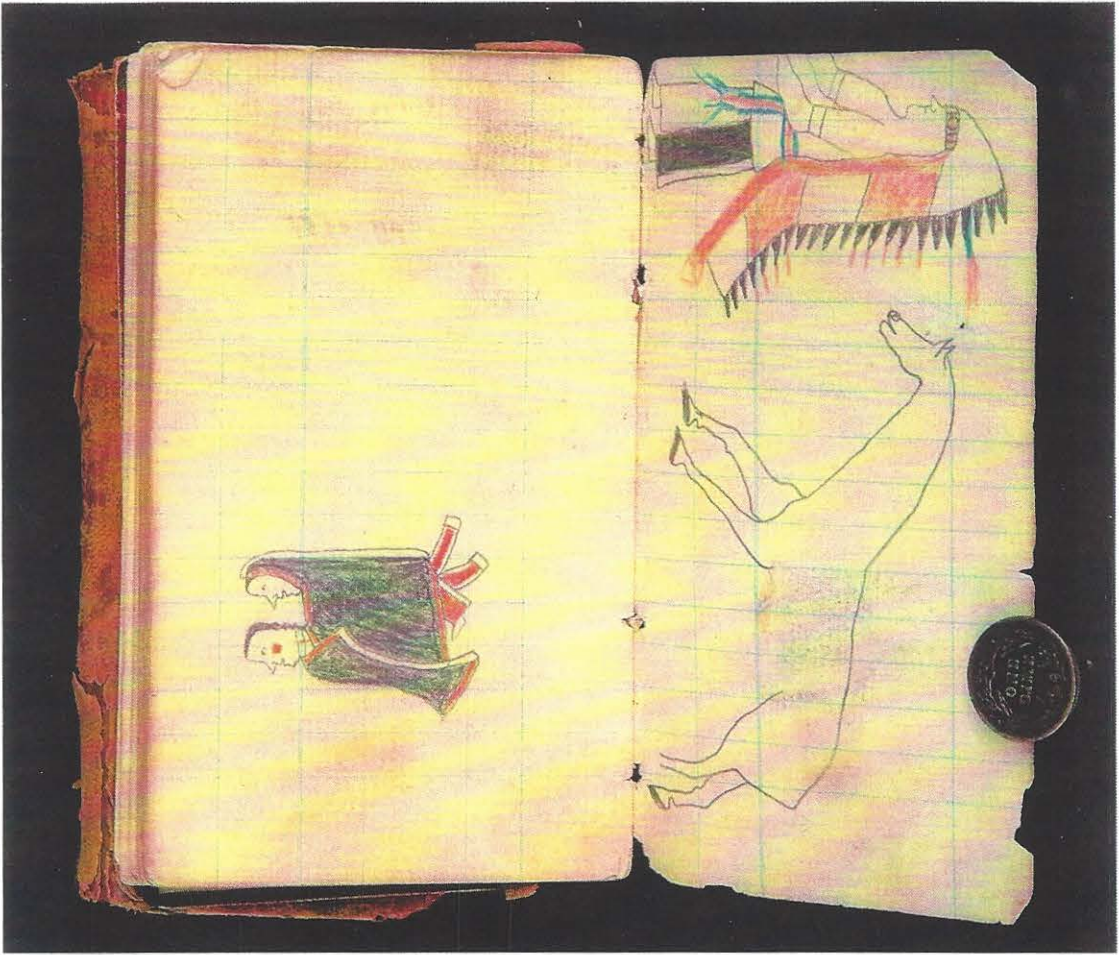




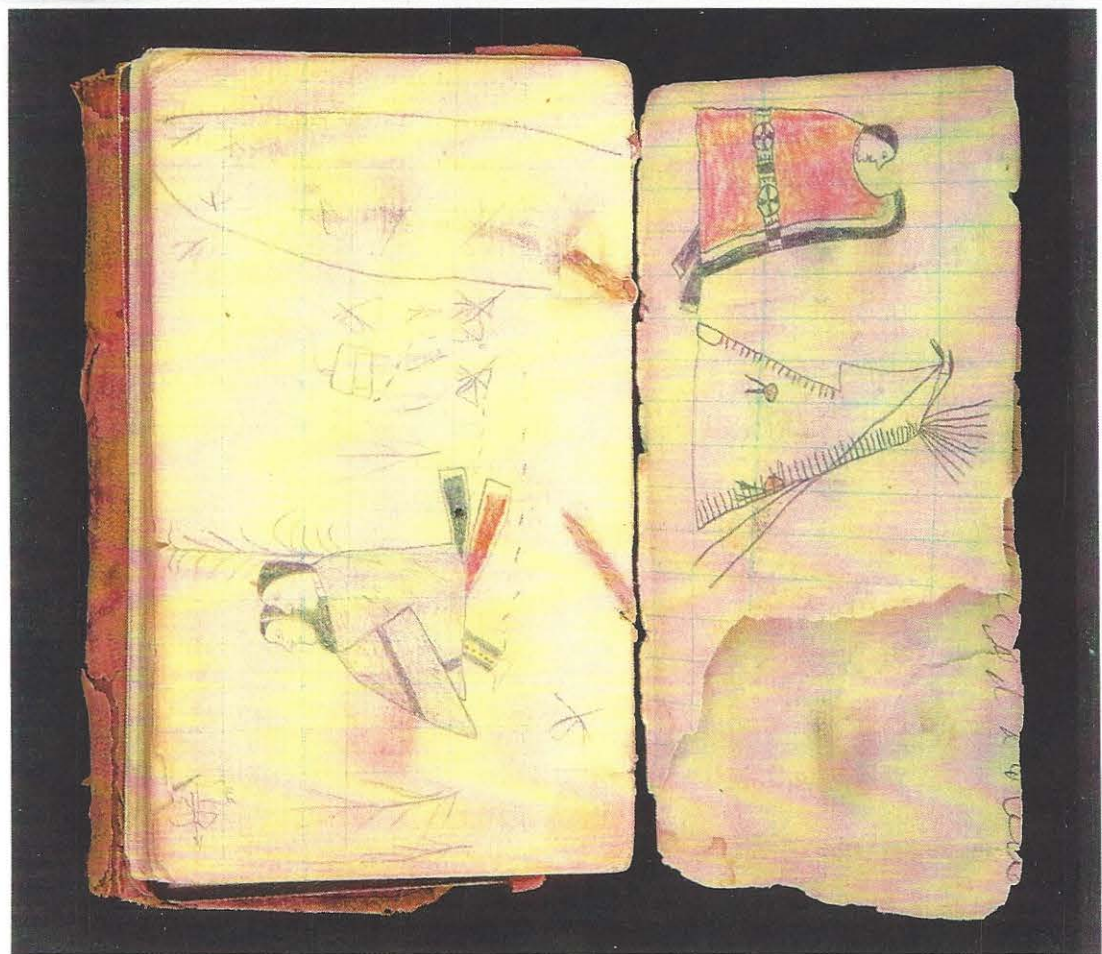
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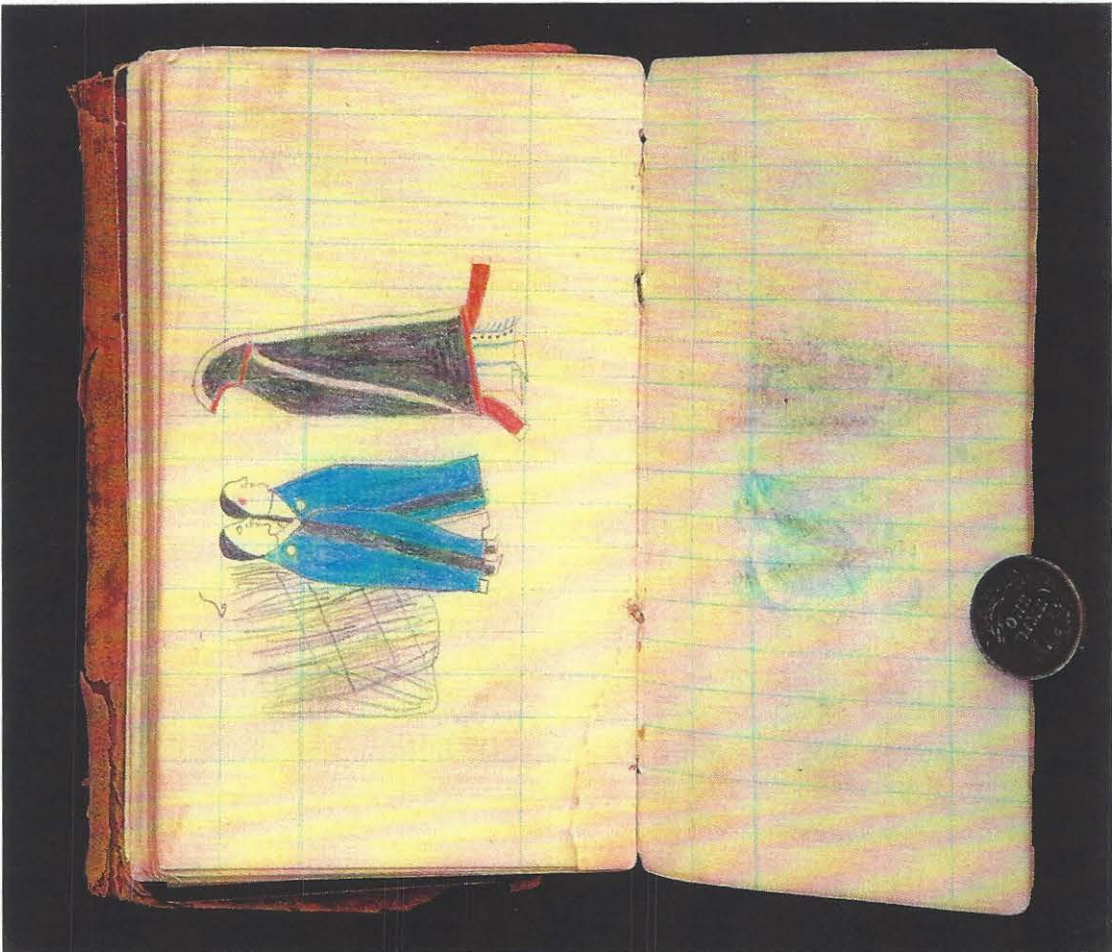
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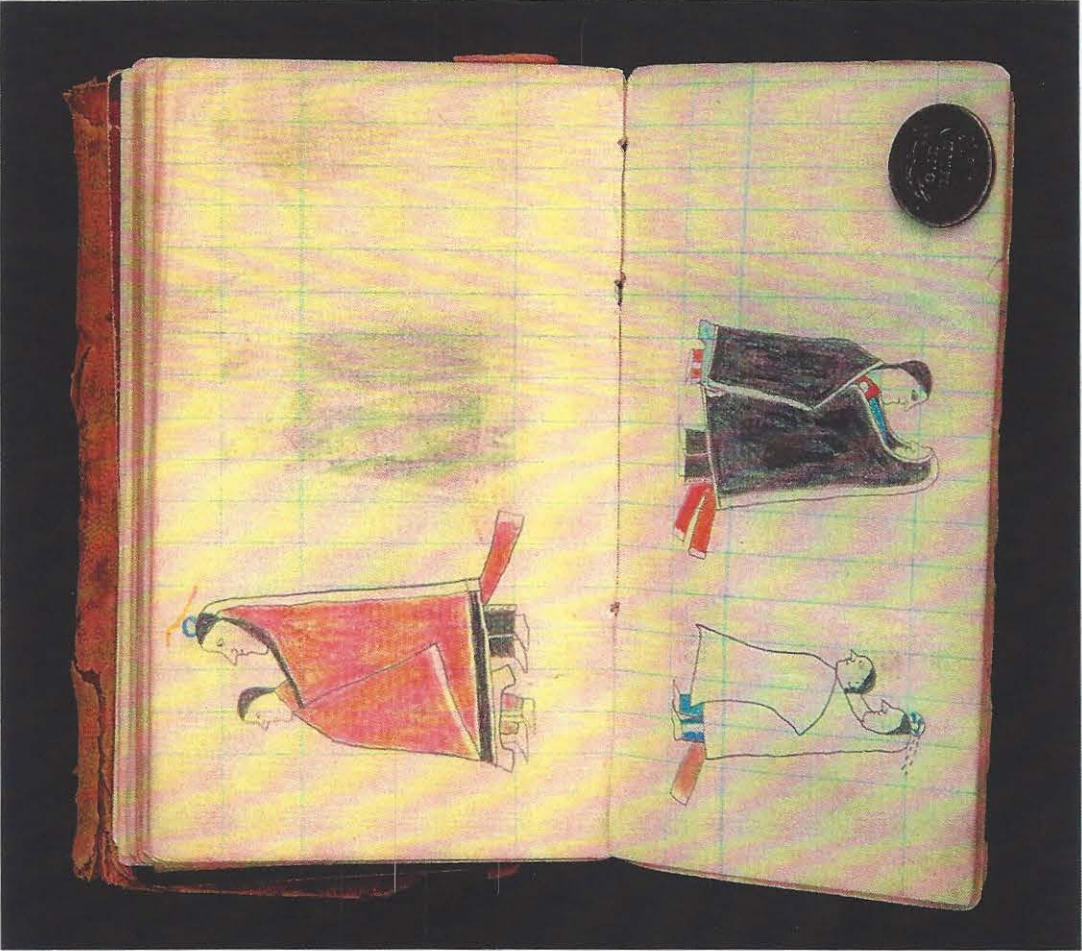
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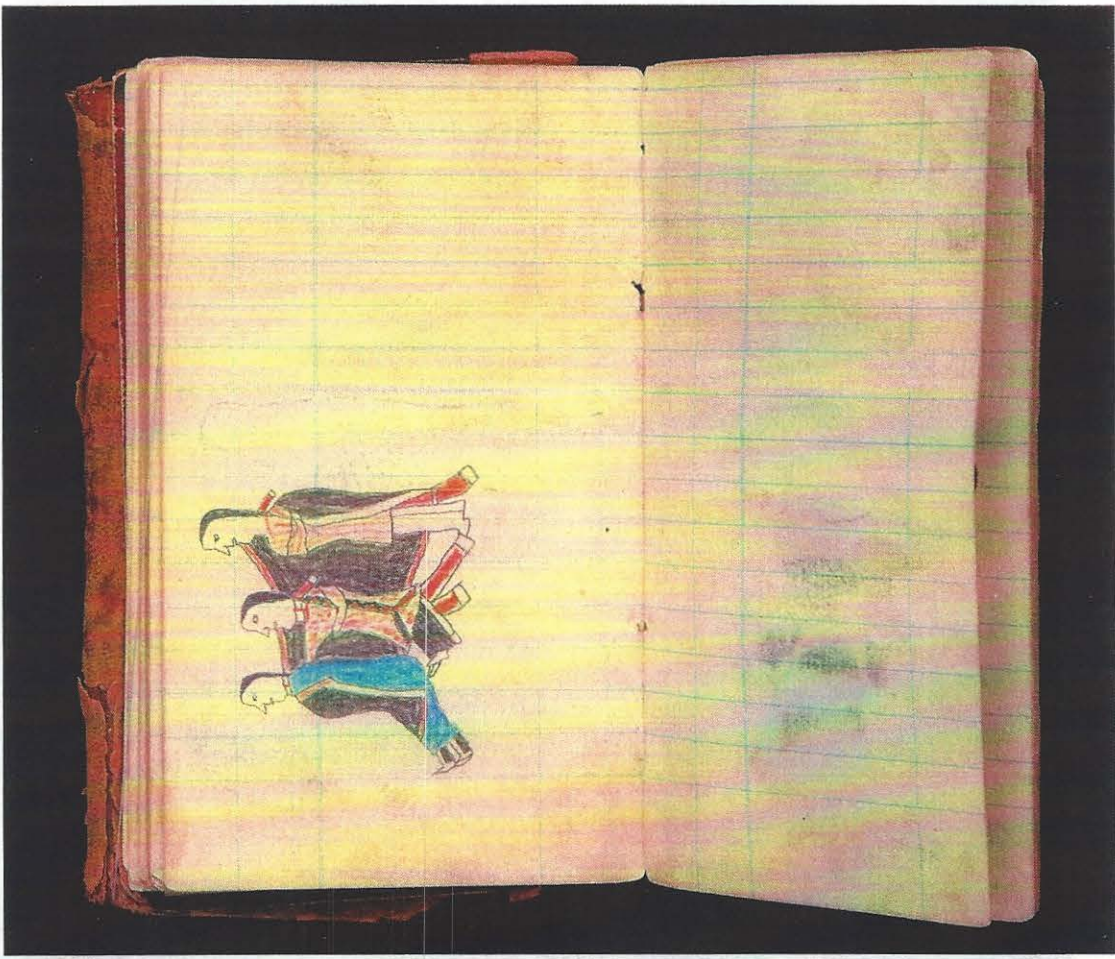
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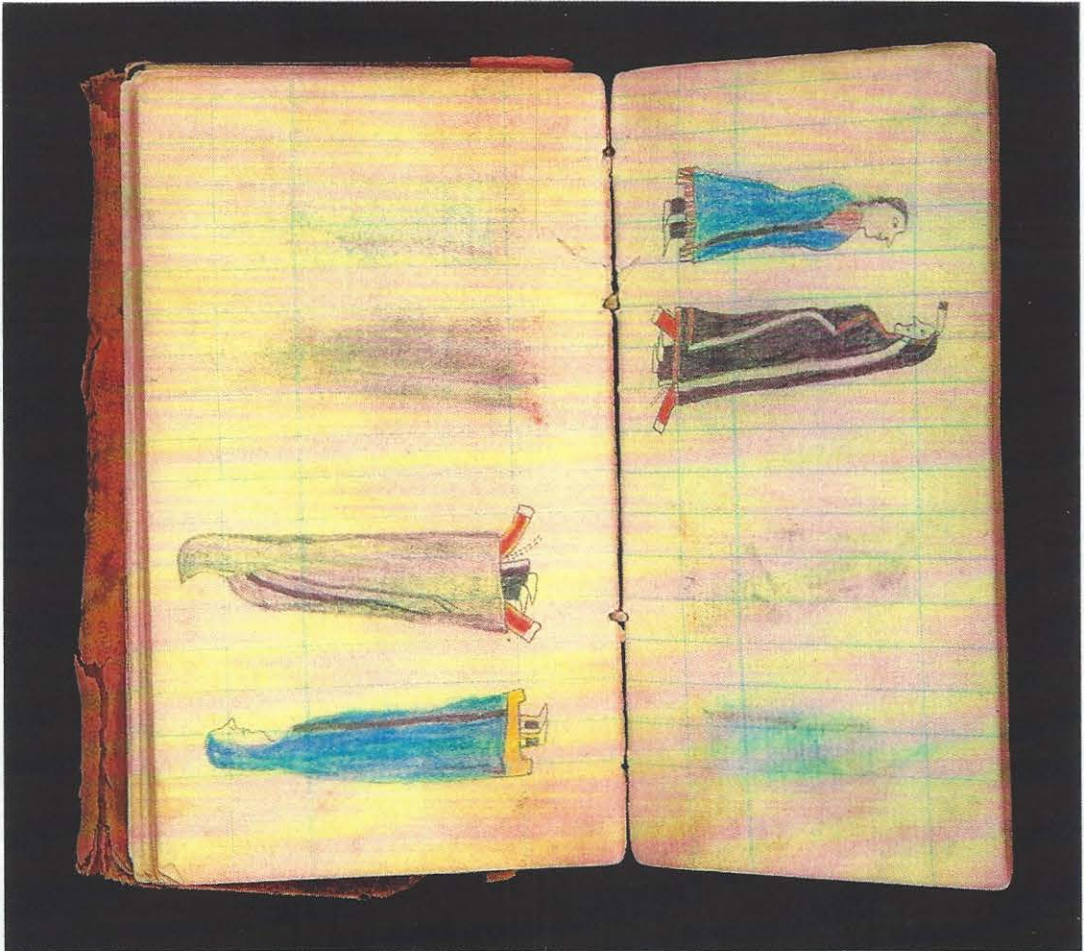
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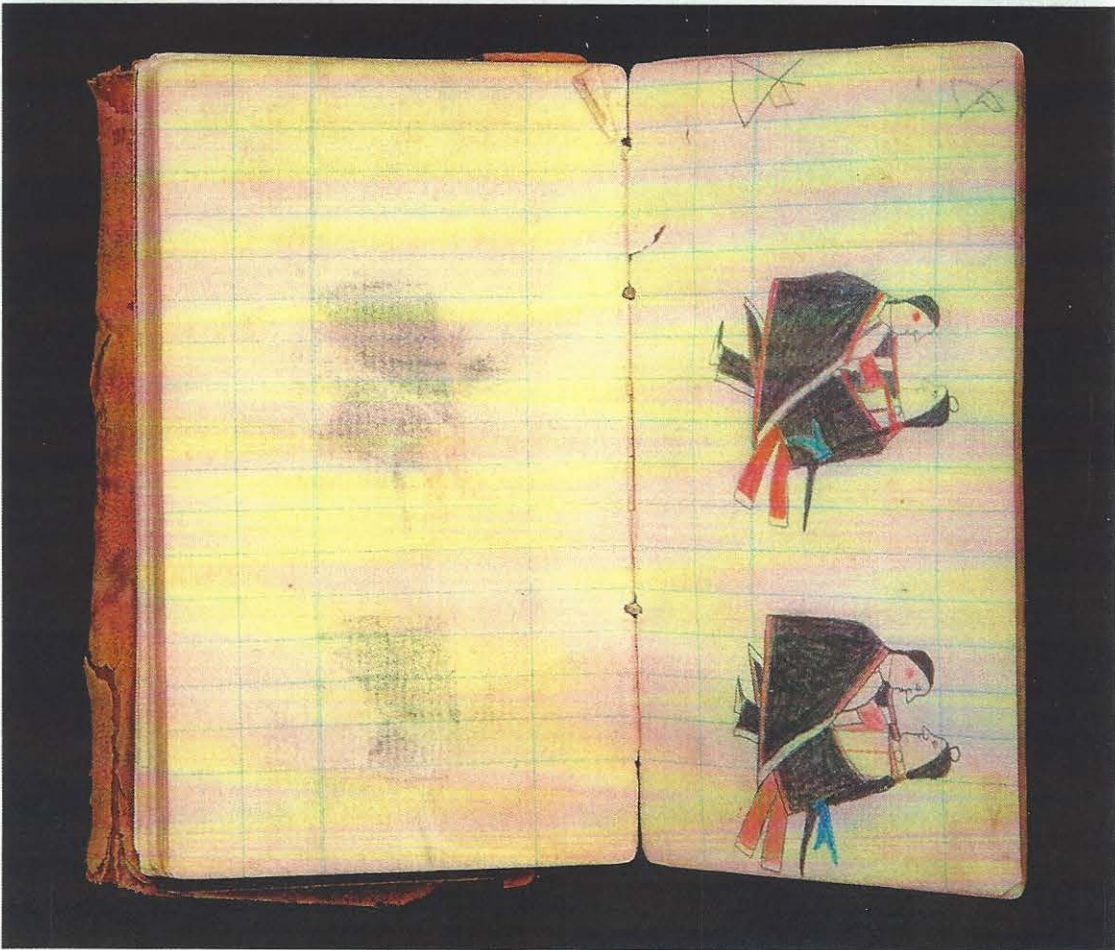
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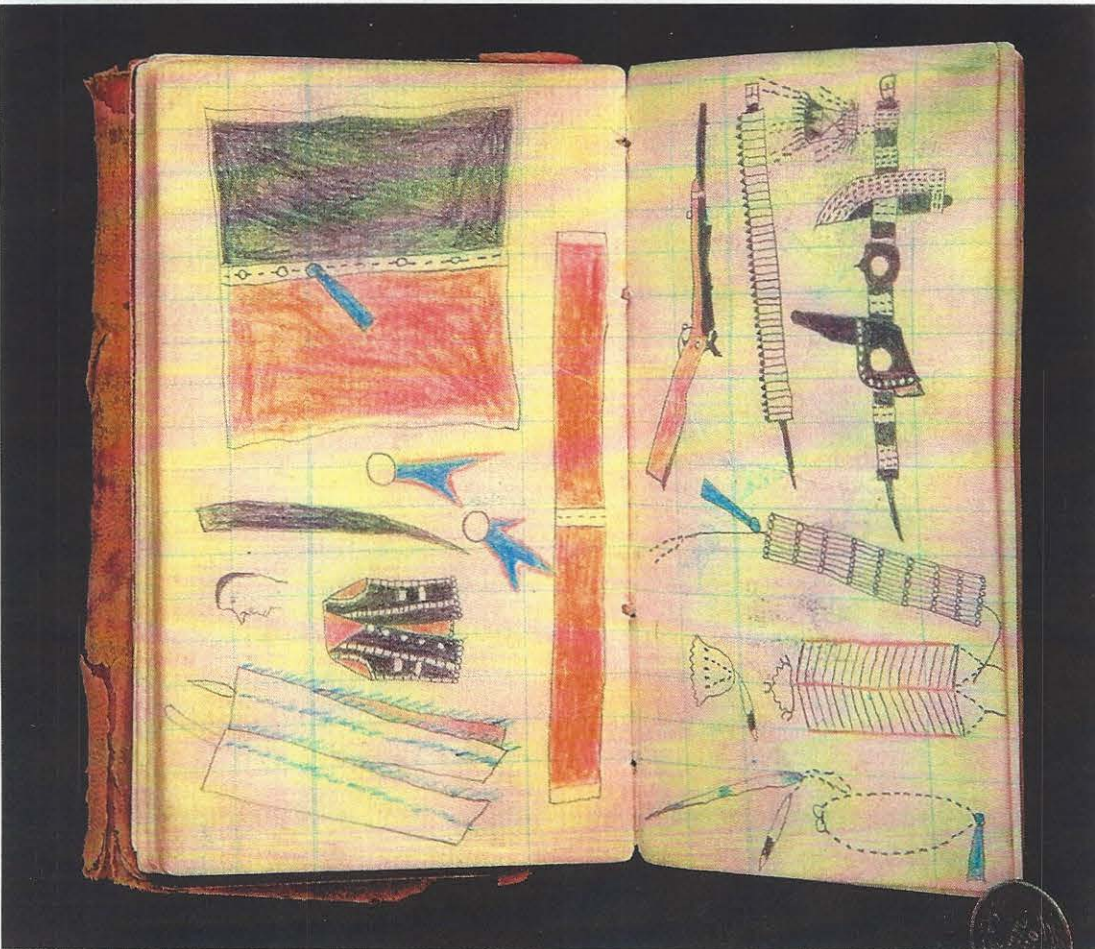
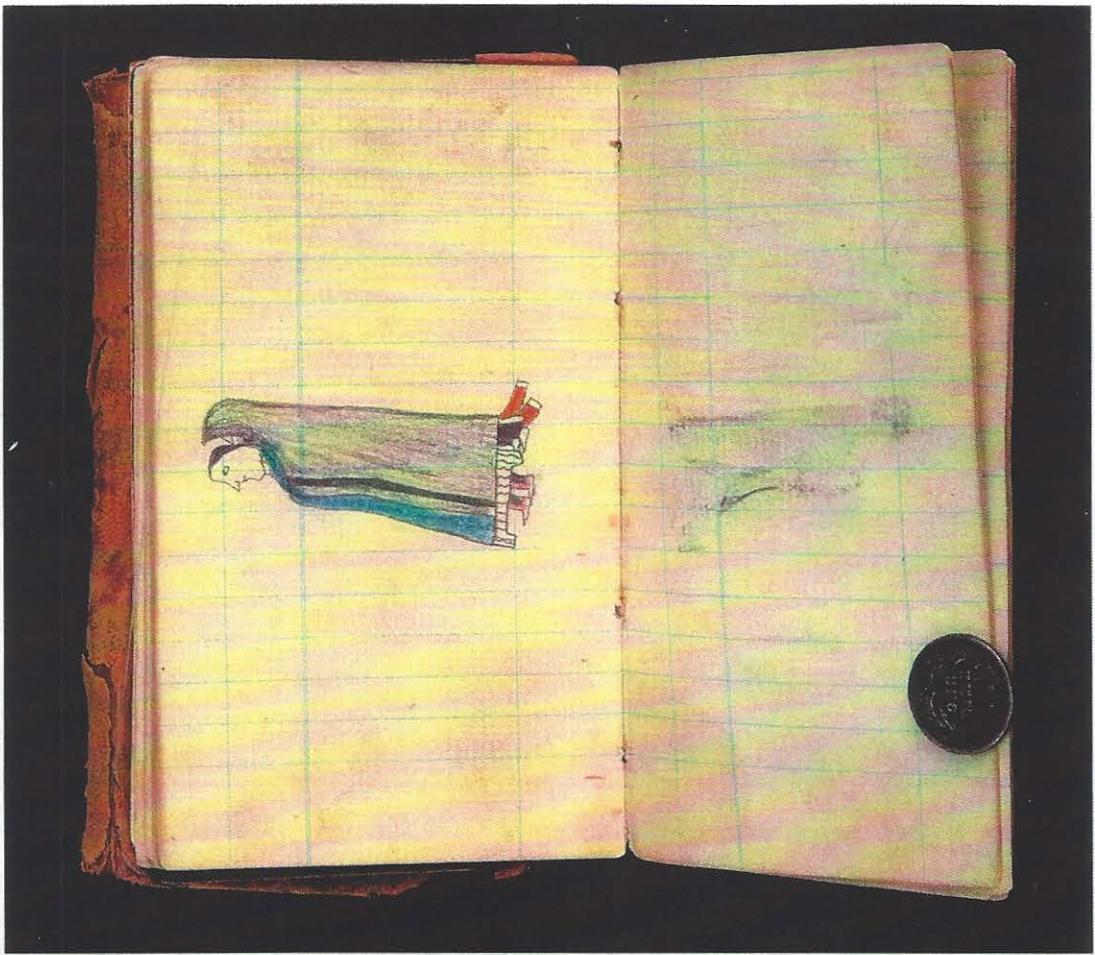
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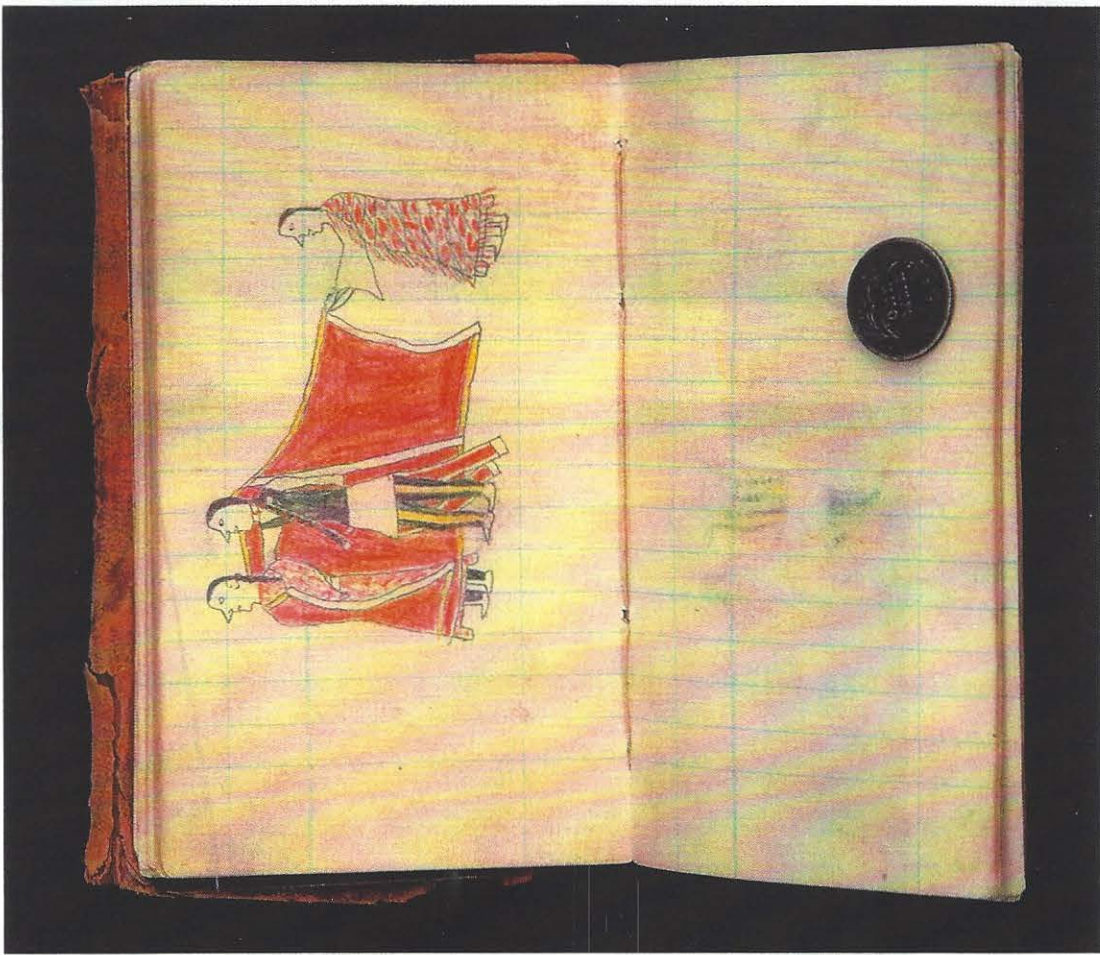


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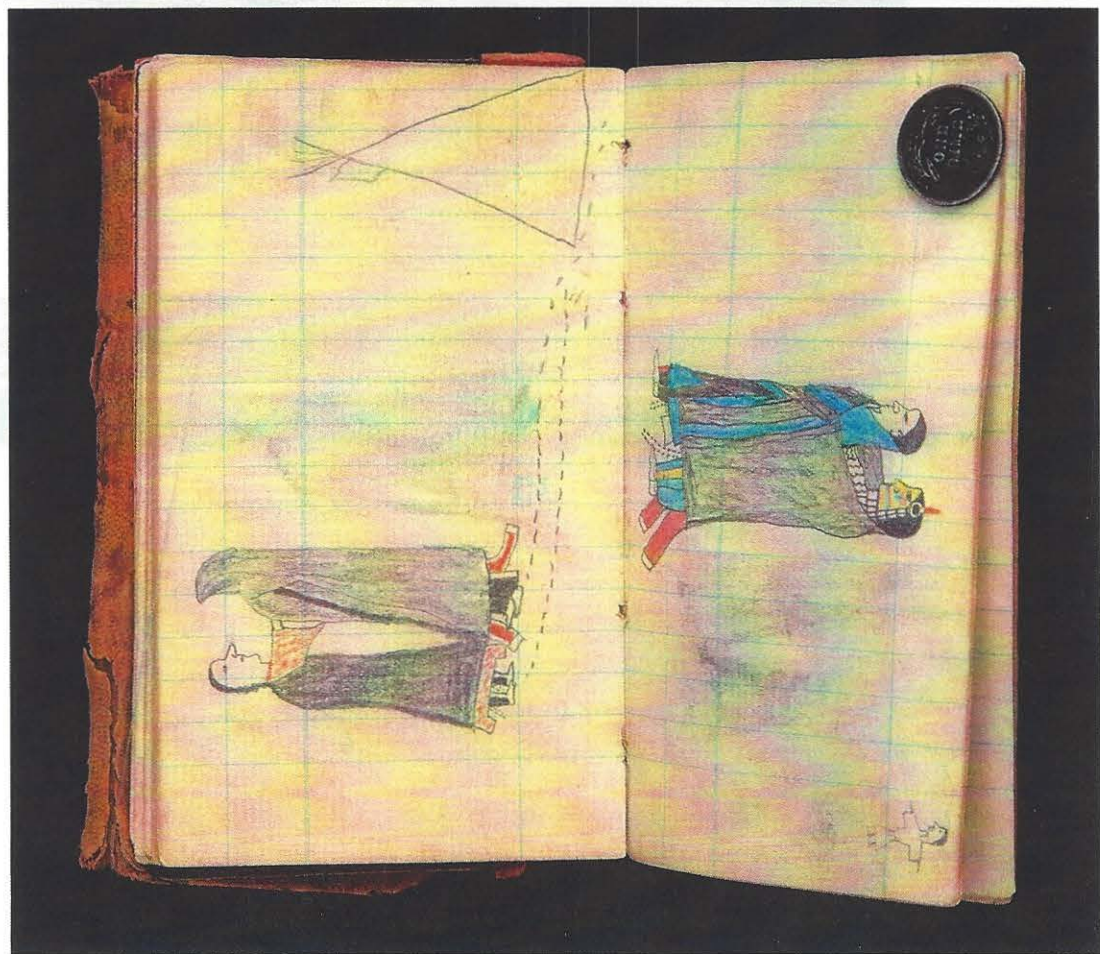


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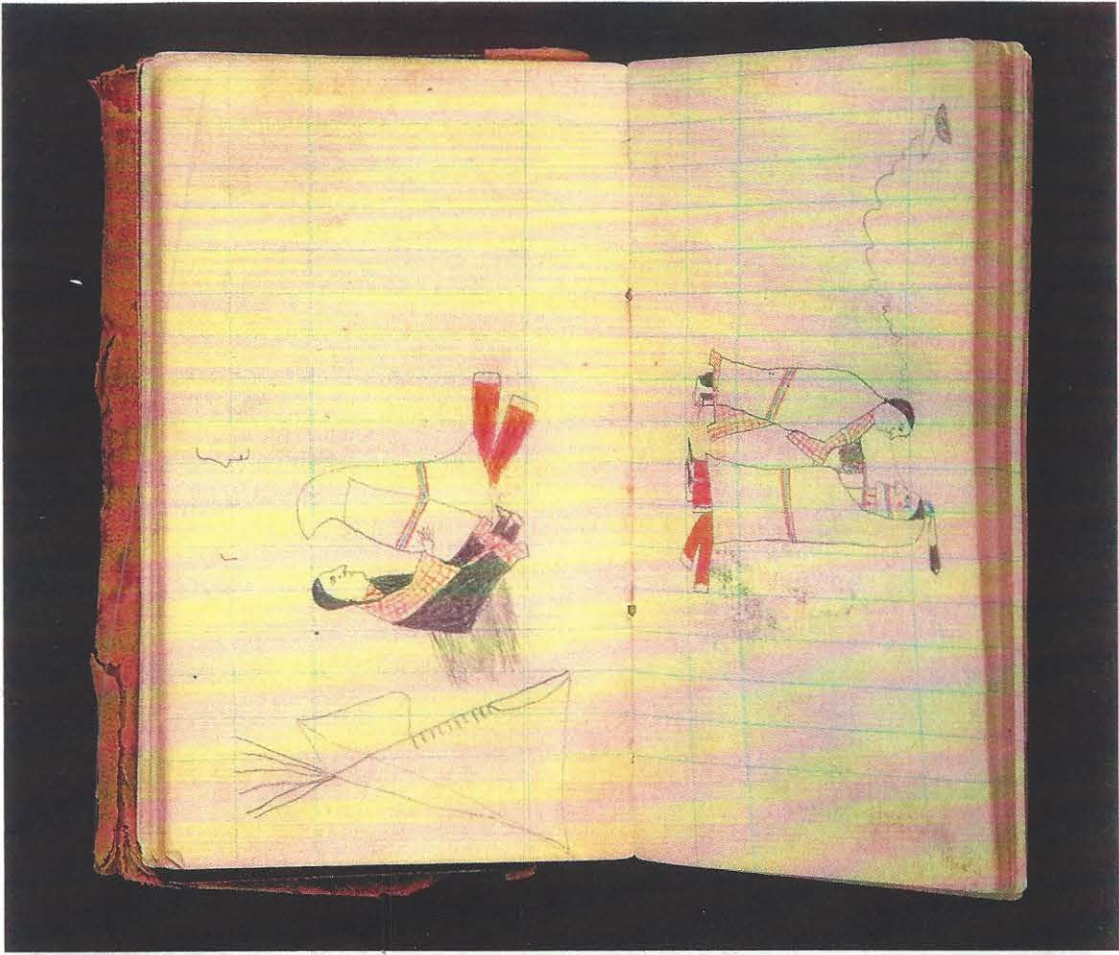
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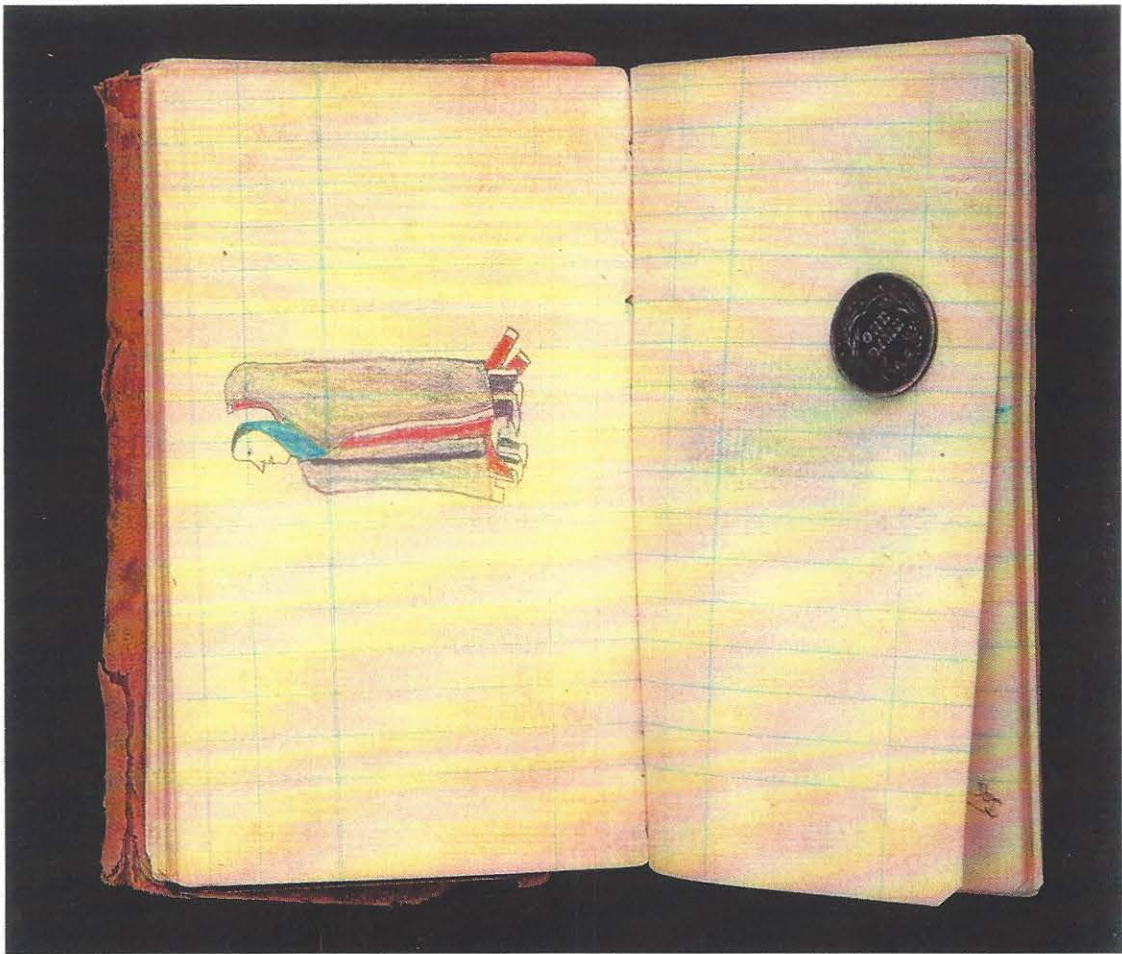
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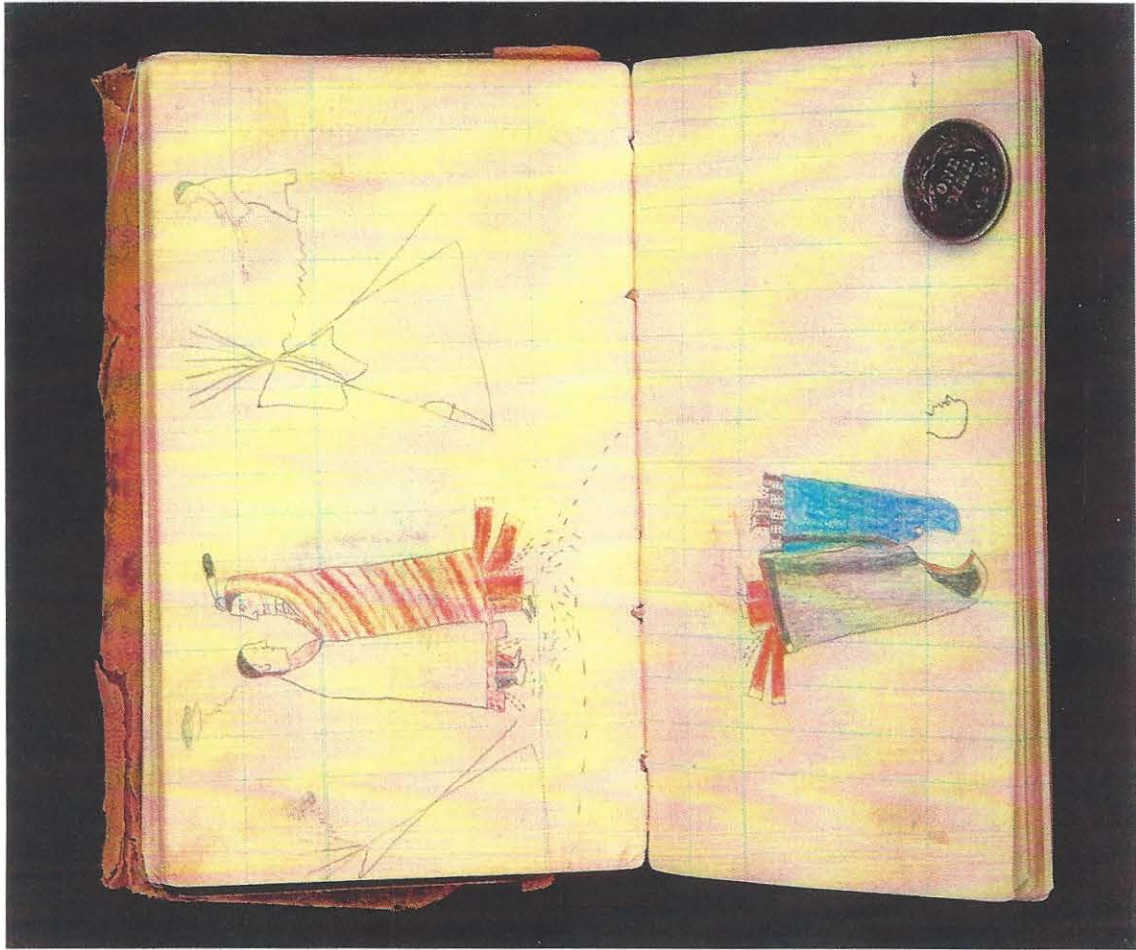
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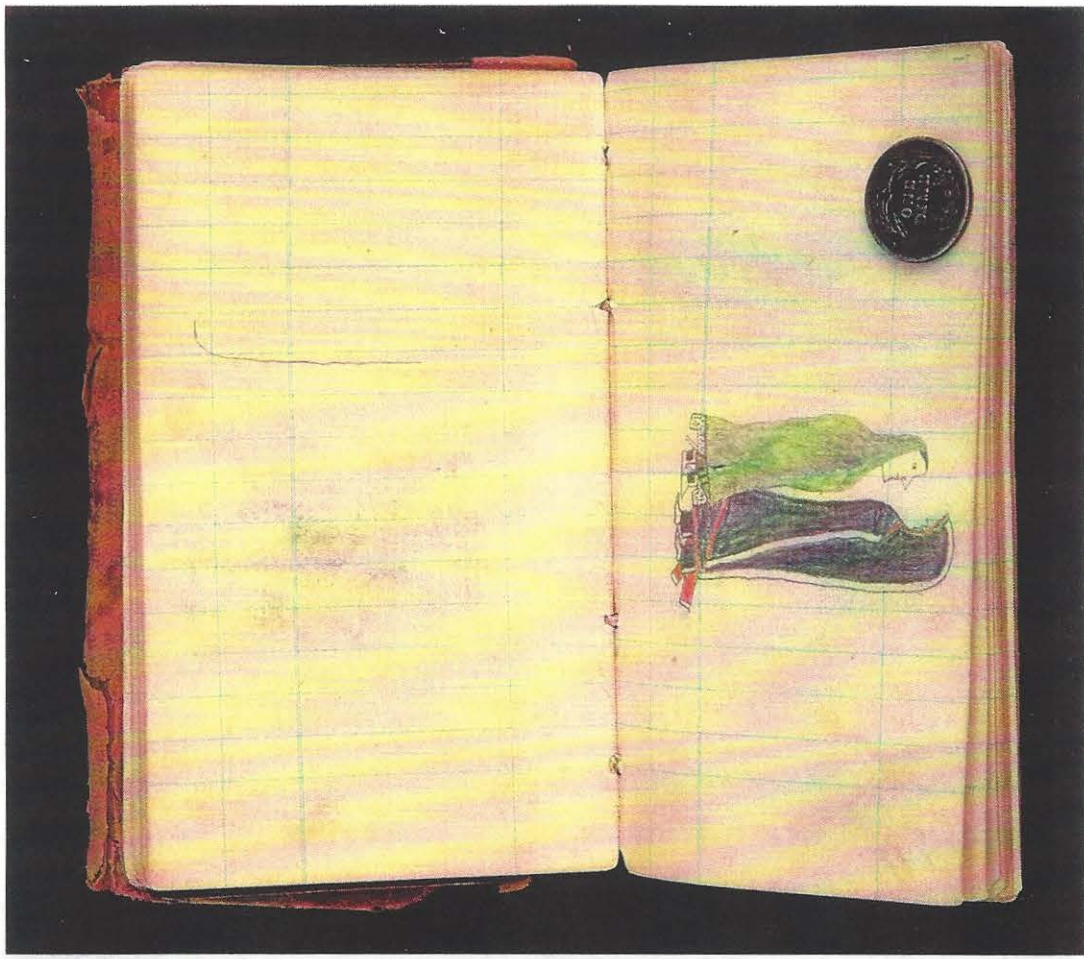
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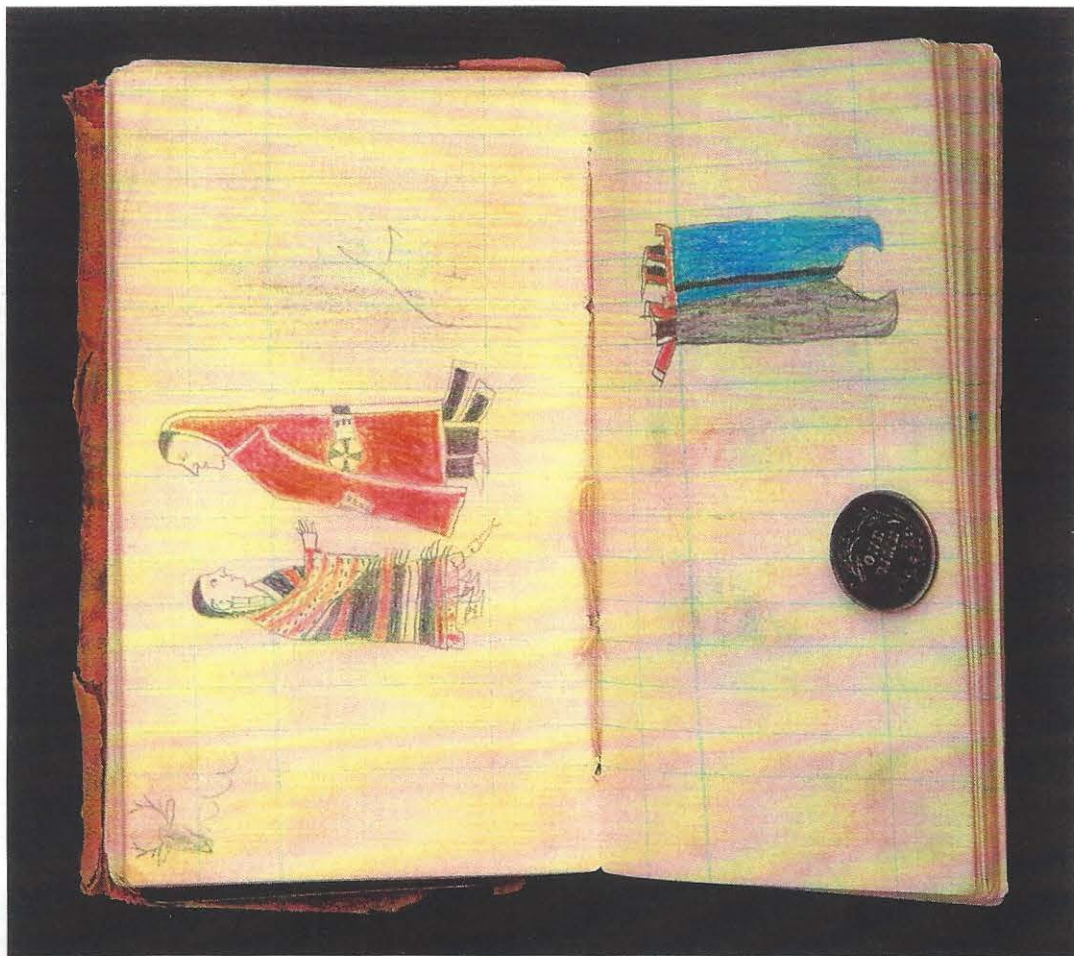
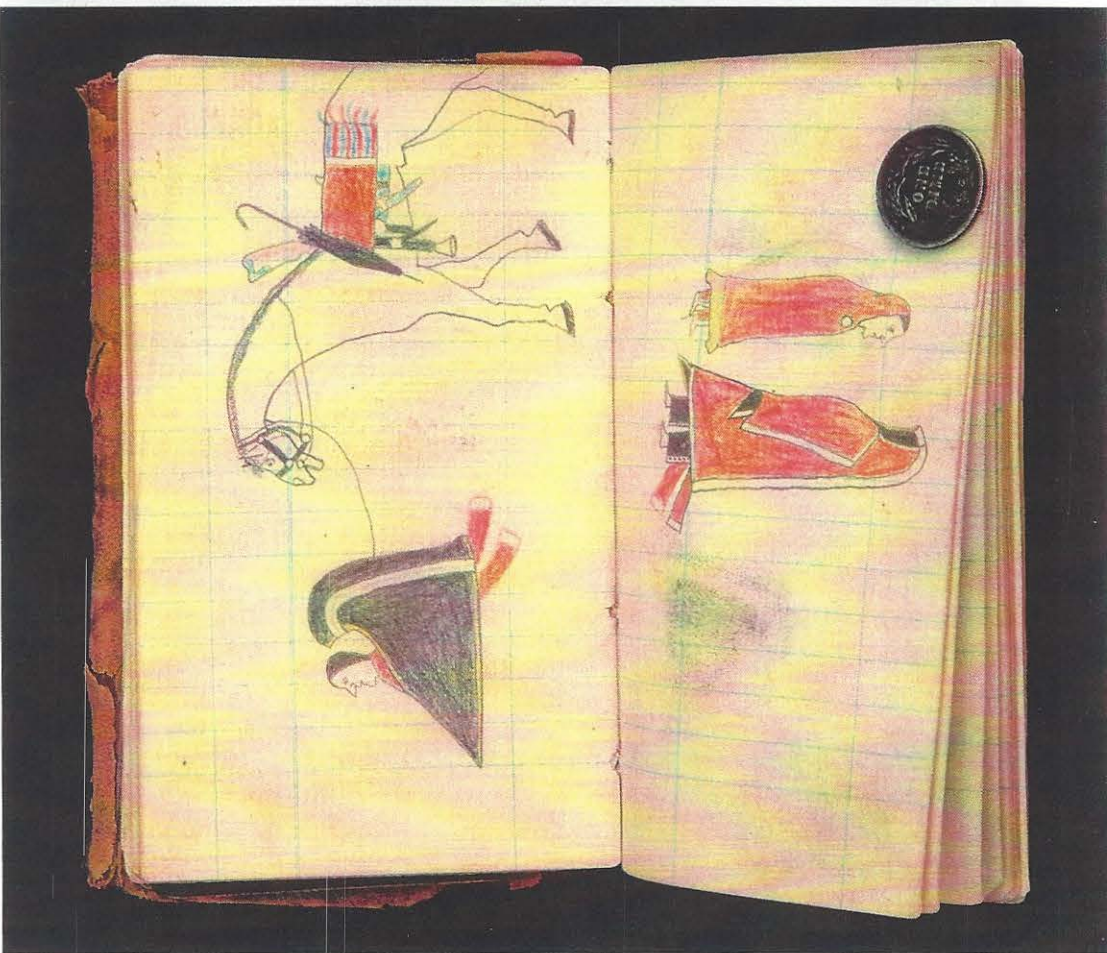
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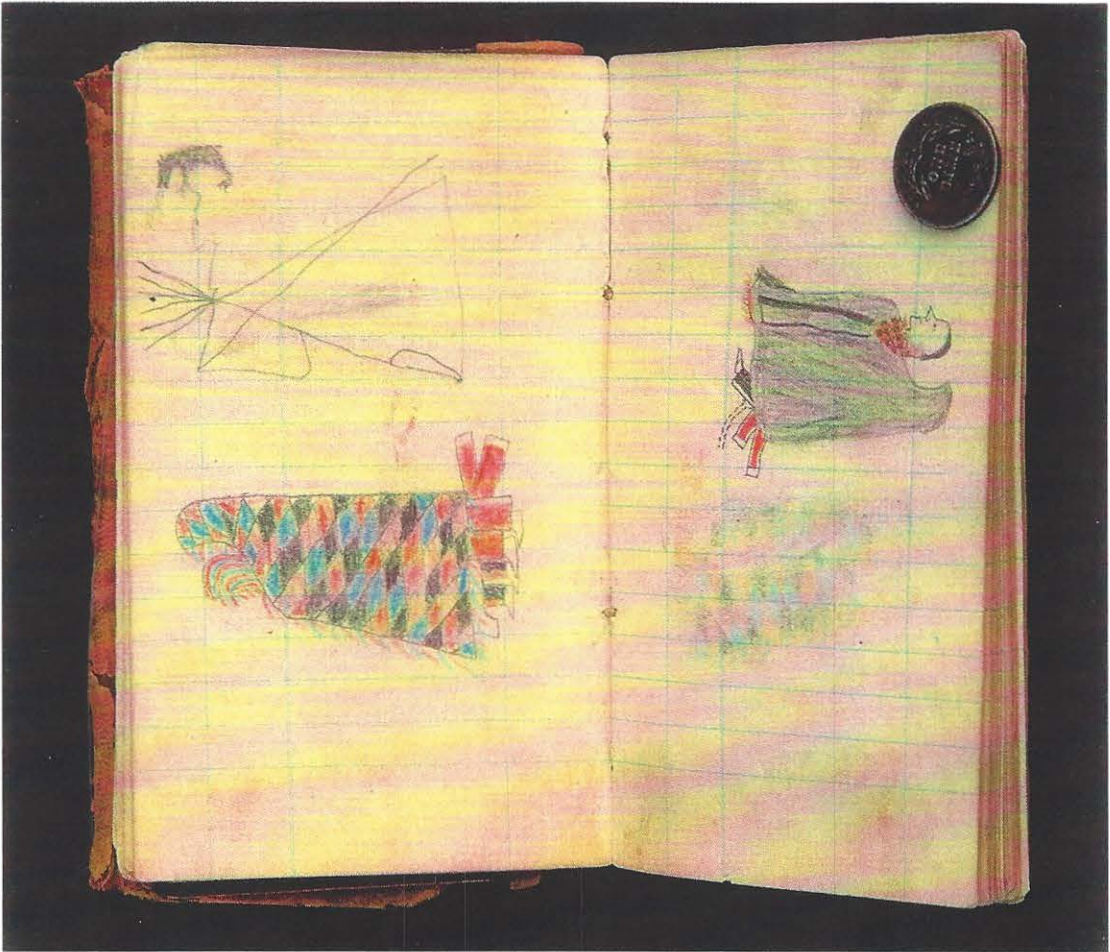


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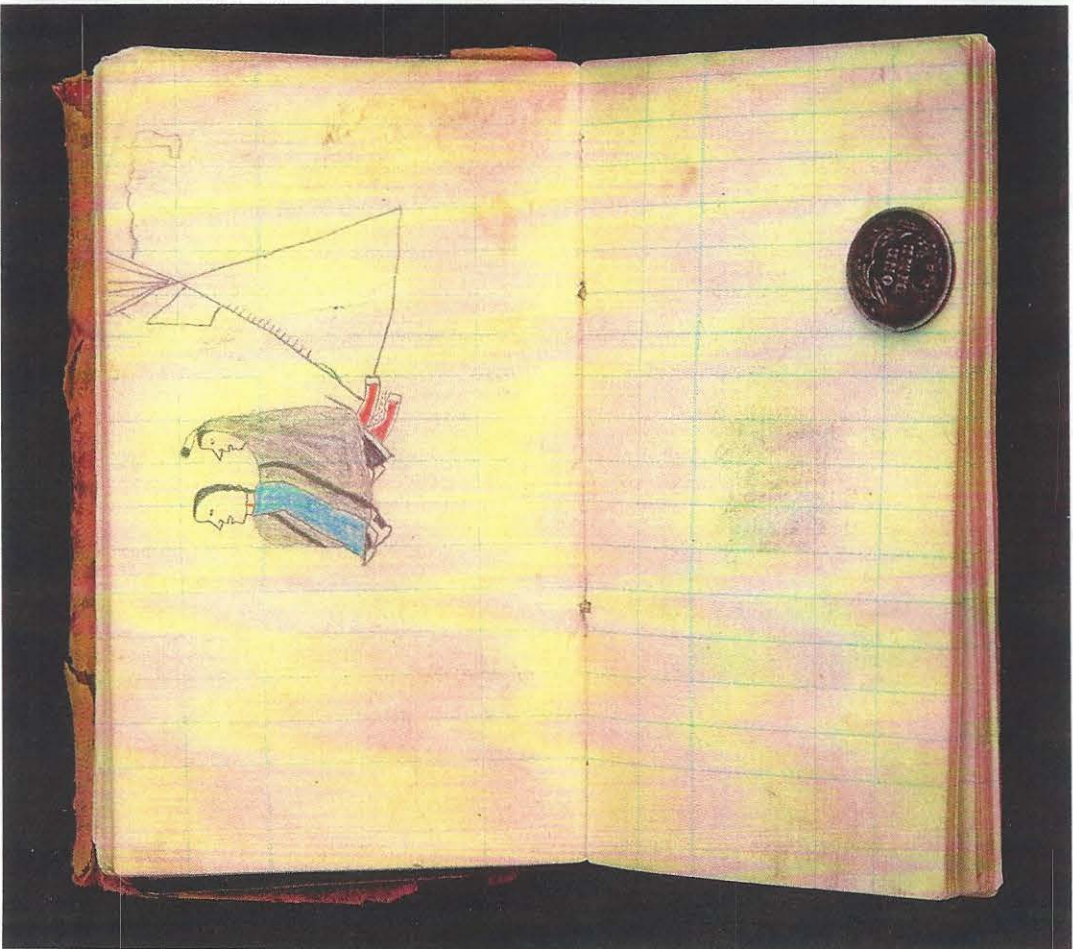


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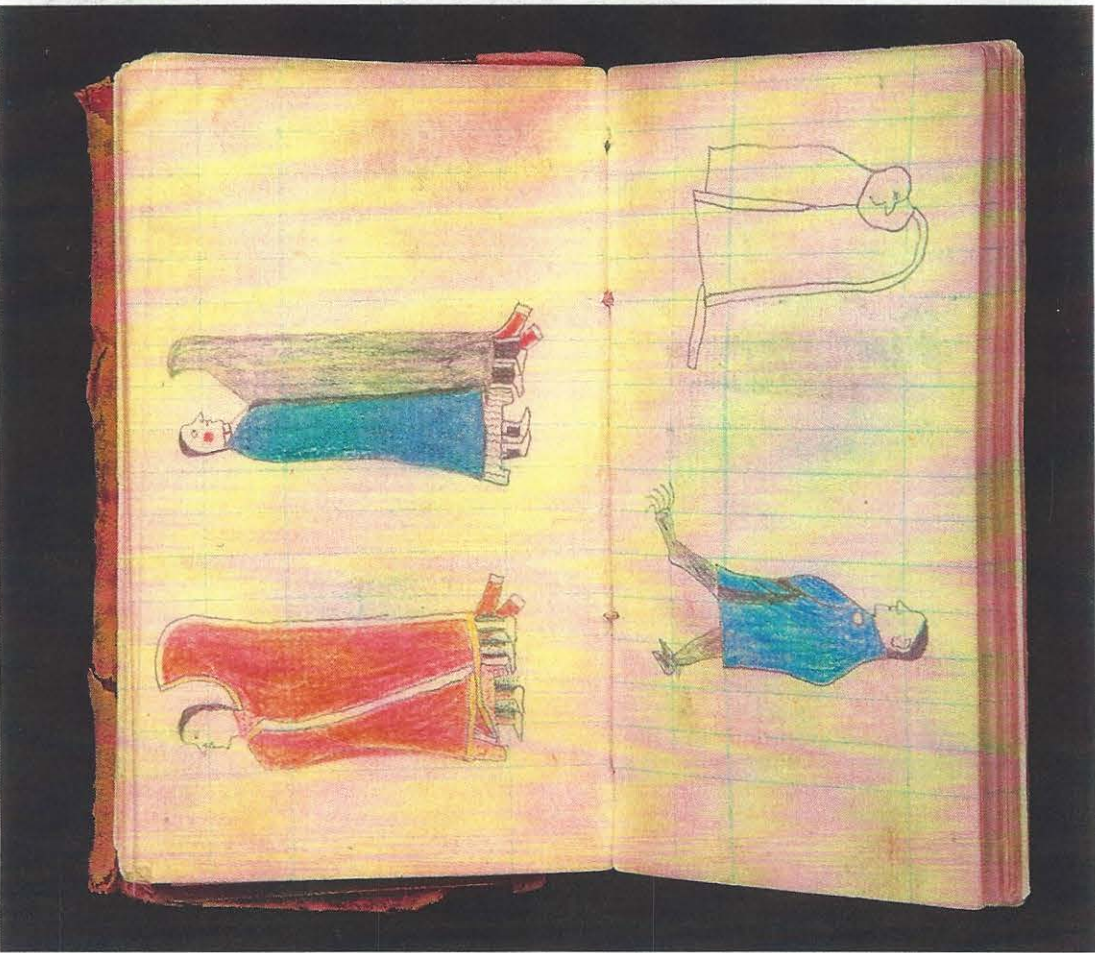




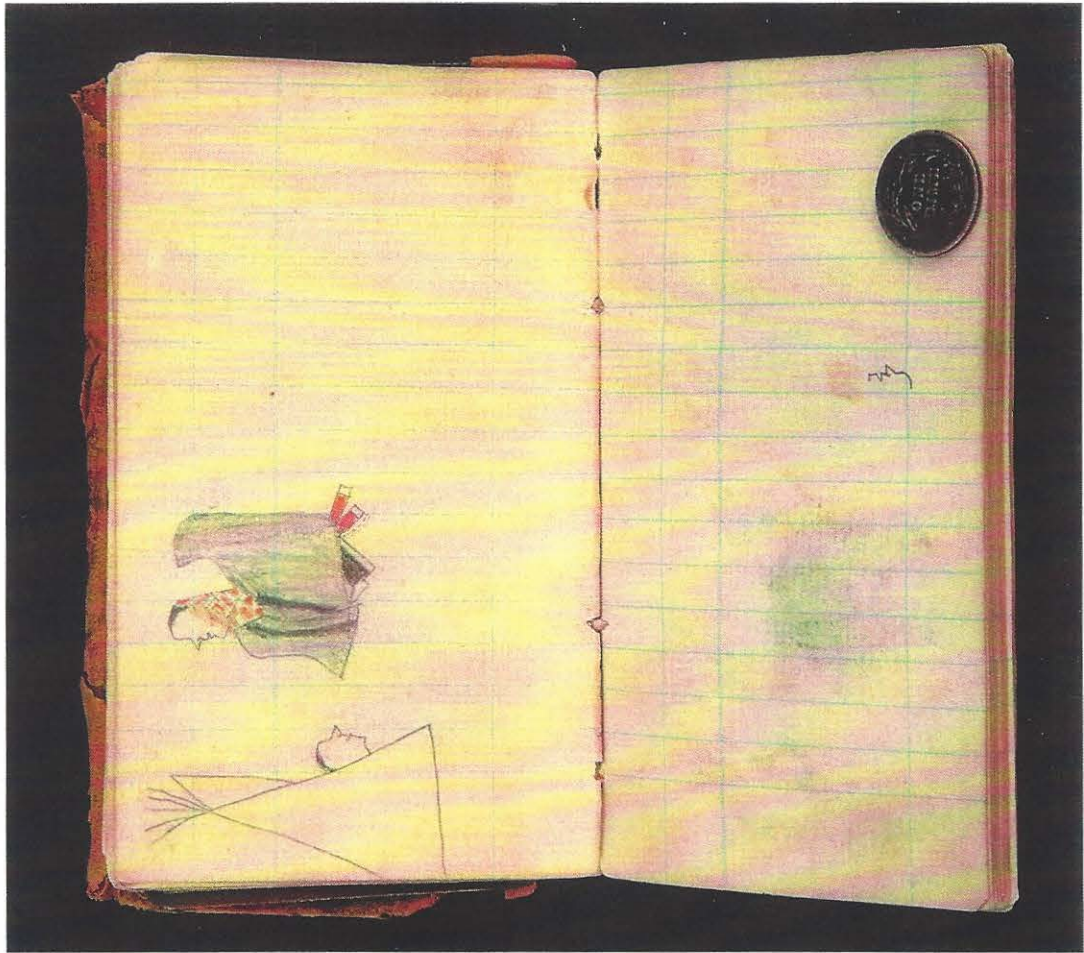
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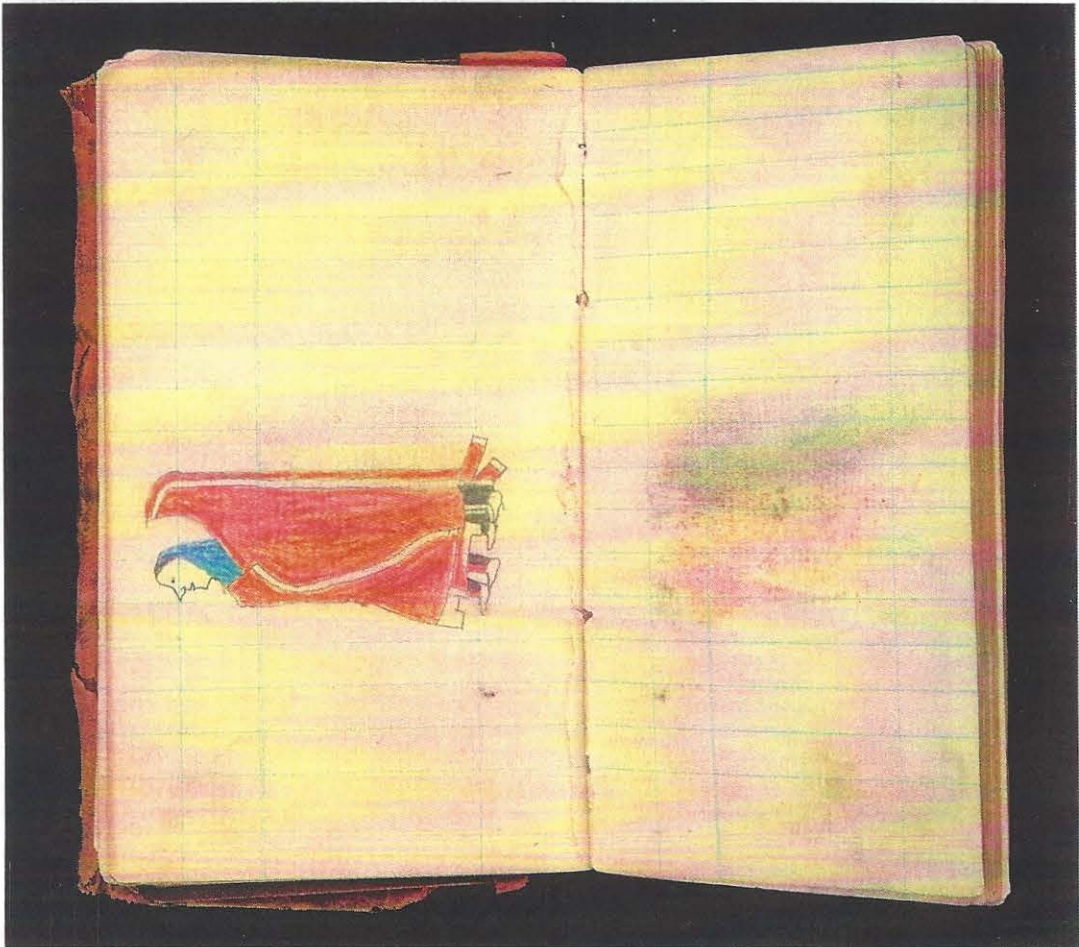
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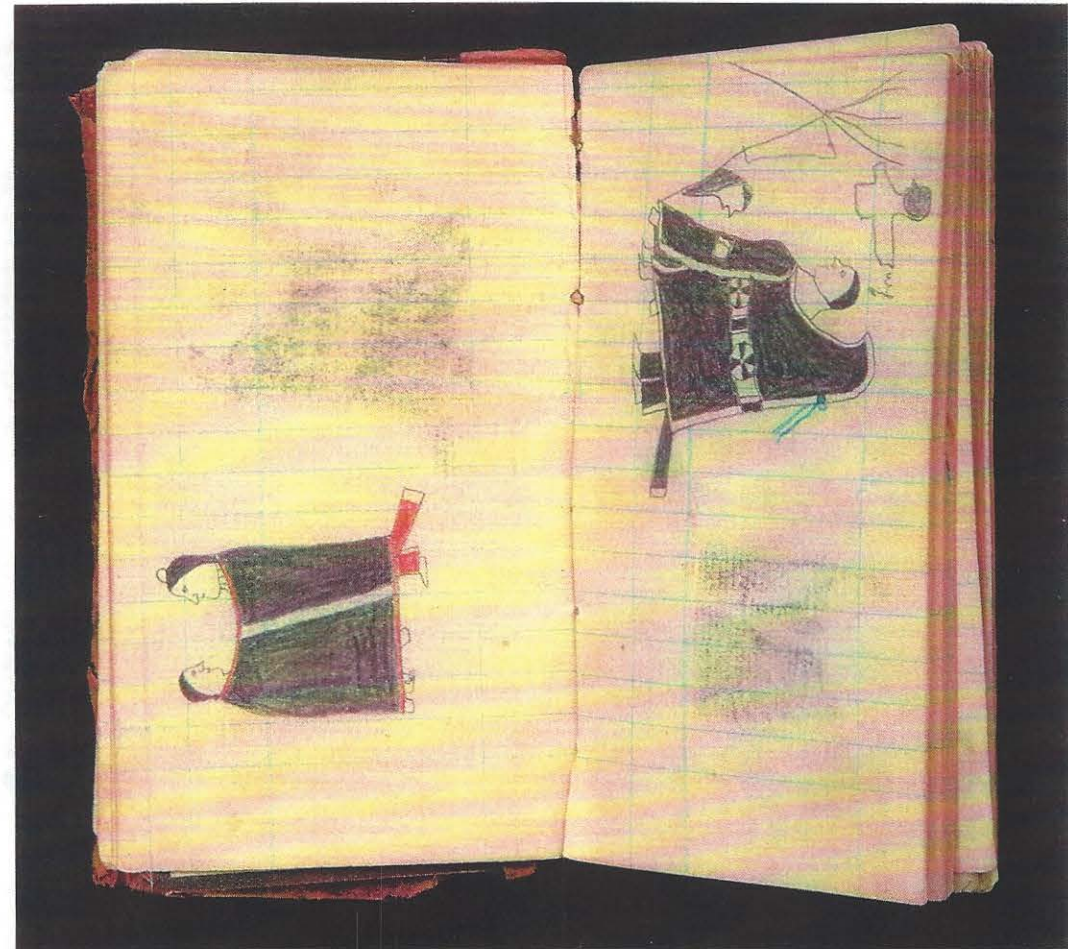
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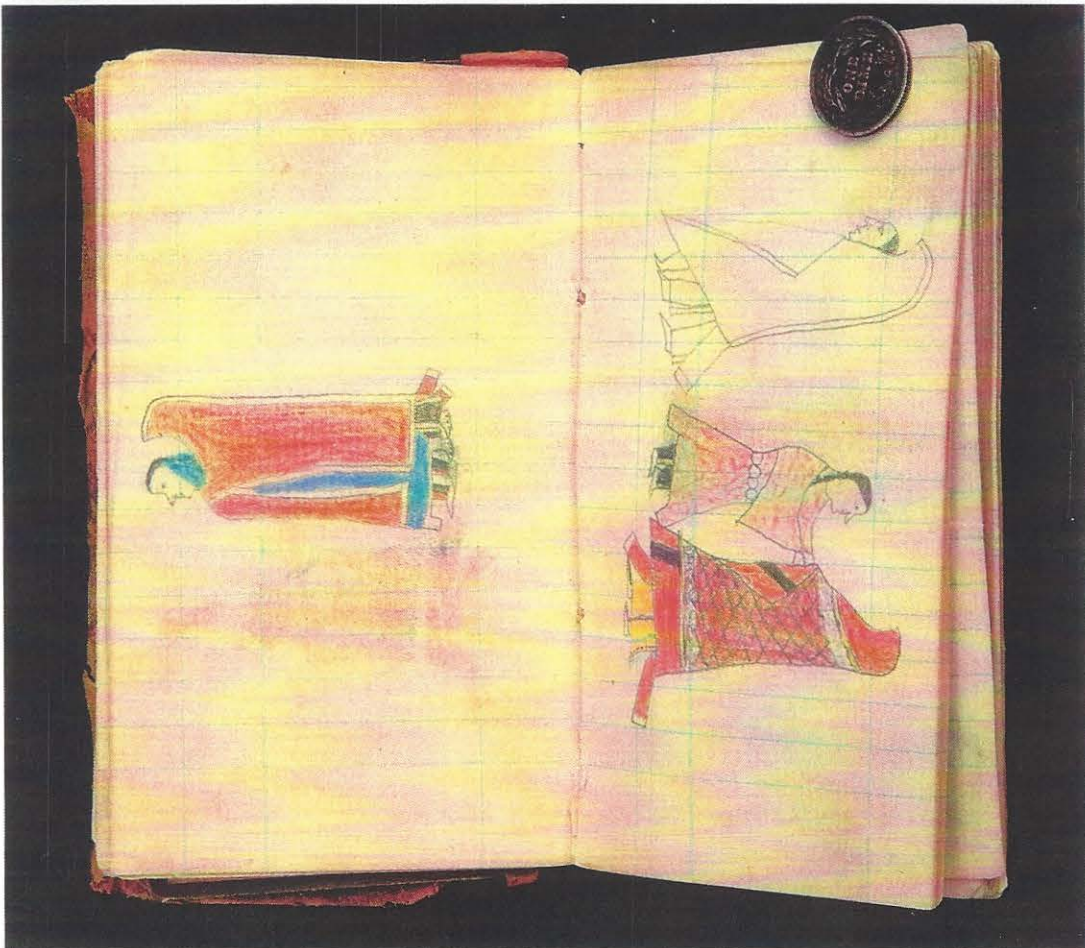
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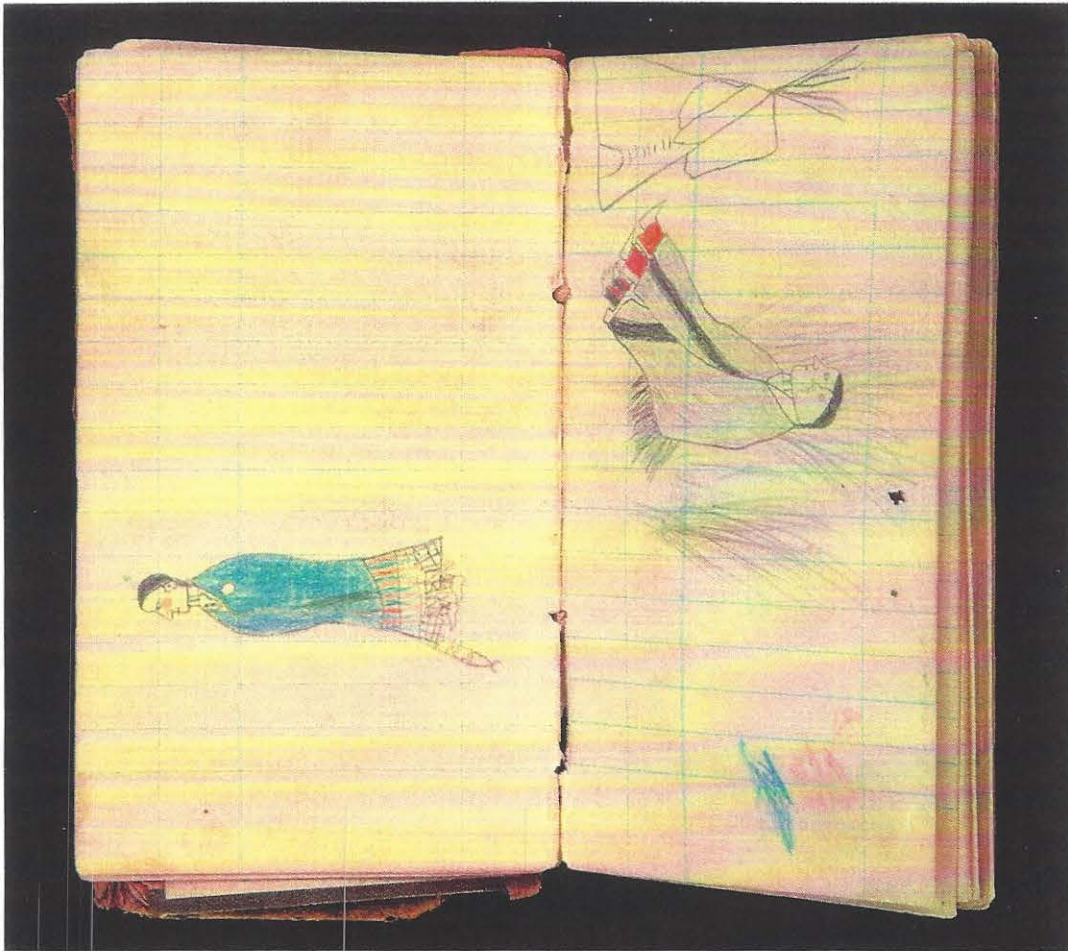
p61-62.tif



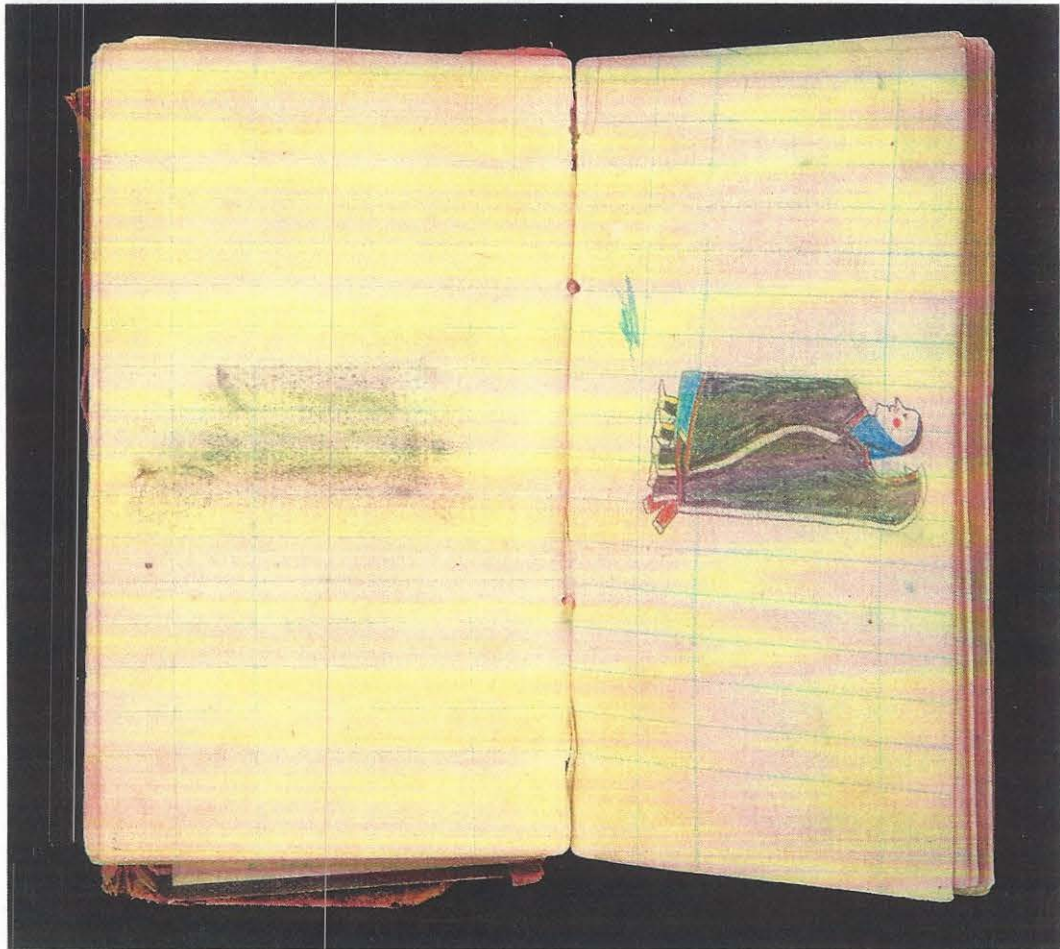
p67-68.tif



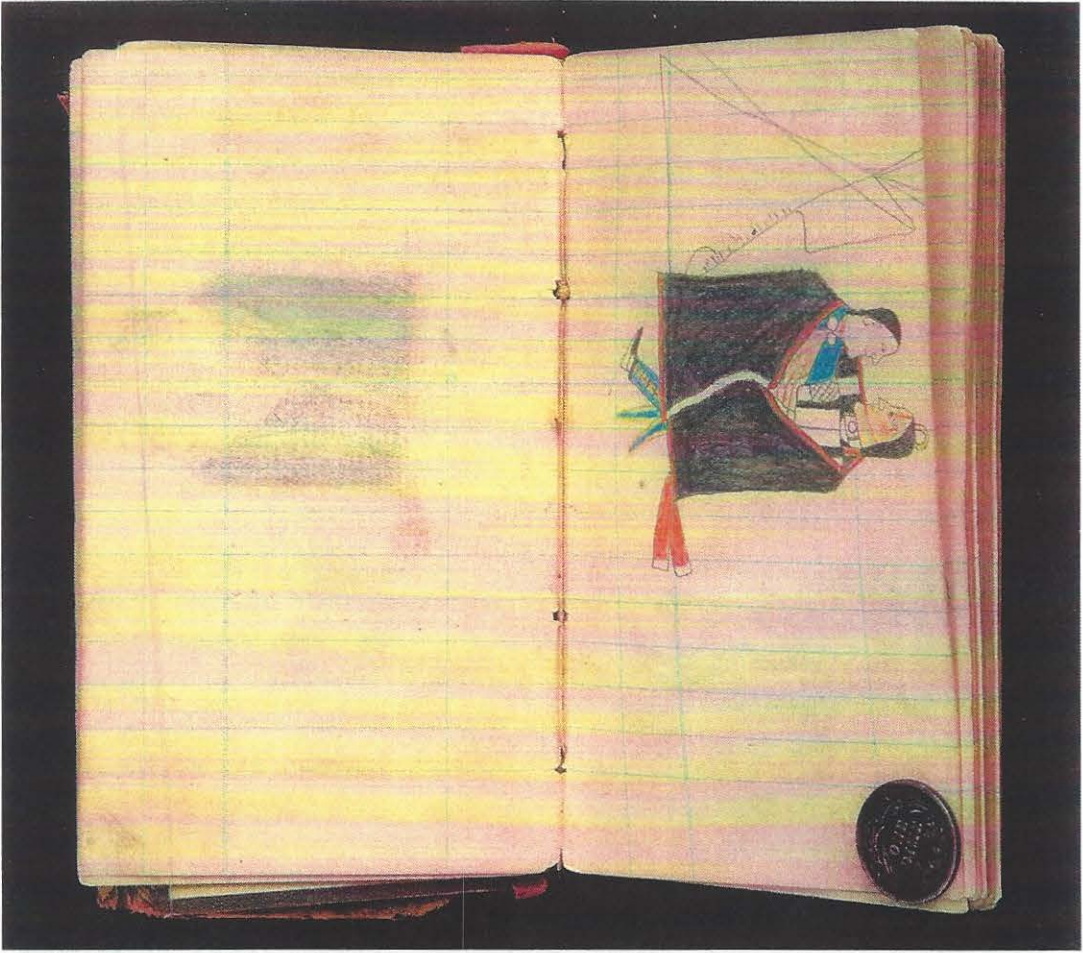
p65-66.tif



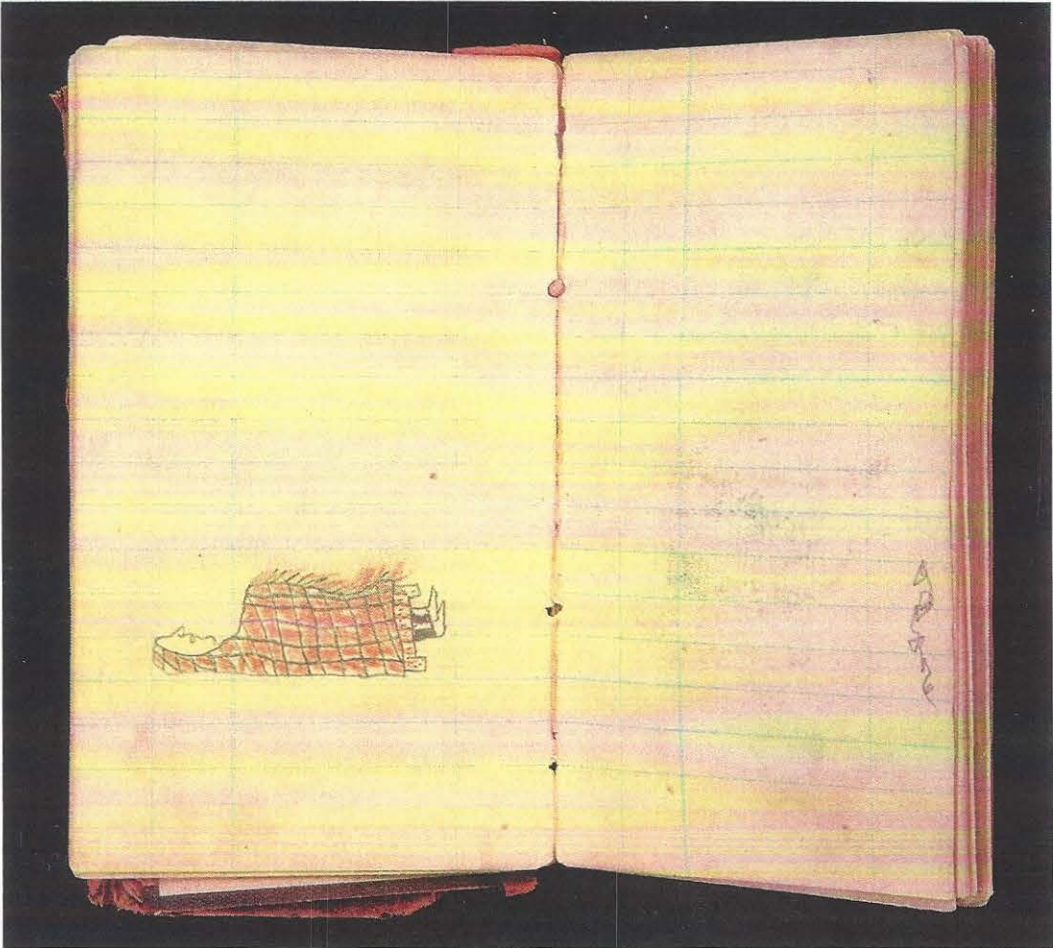
p71-72.tif



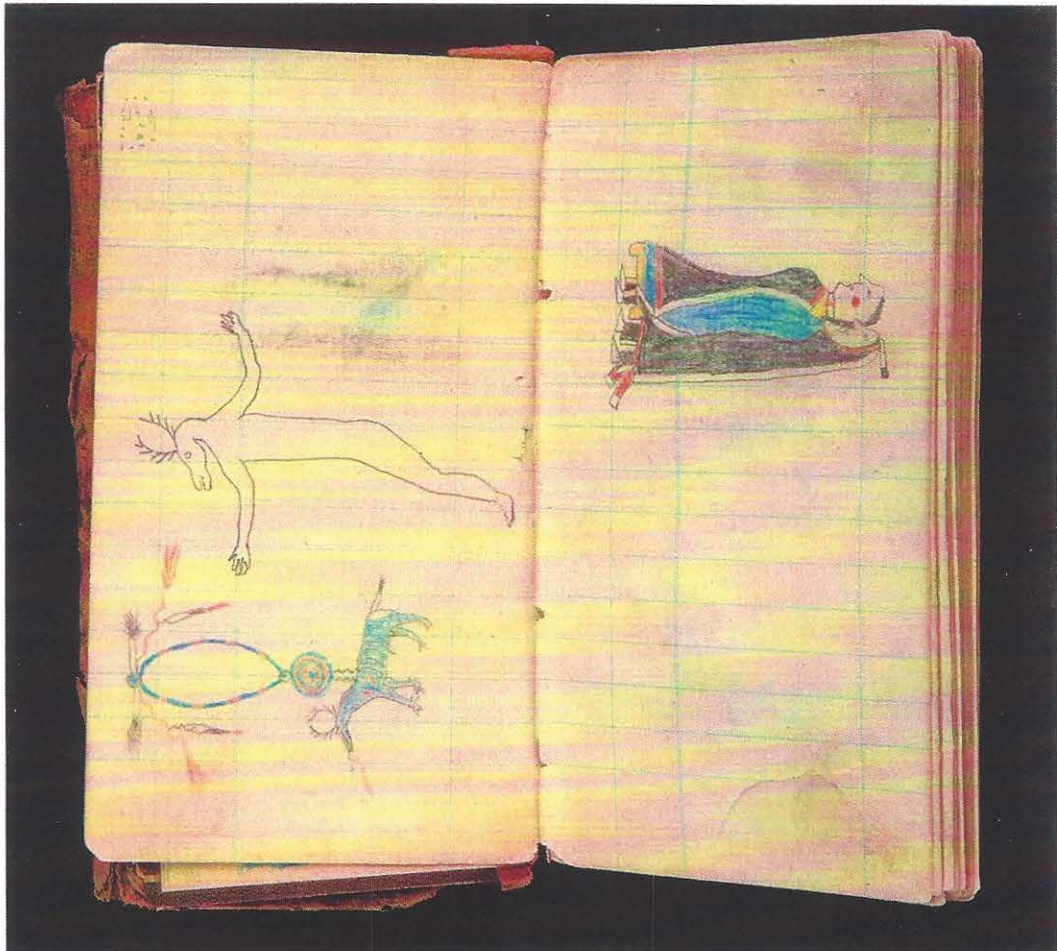
p69-70.tif



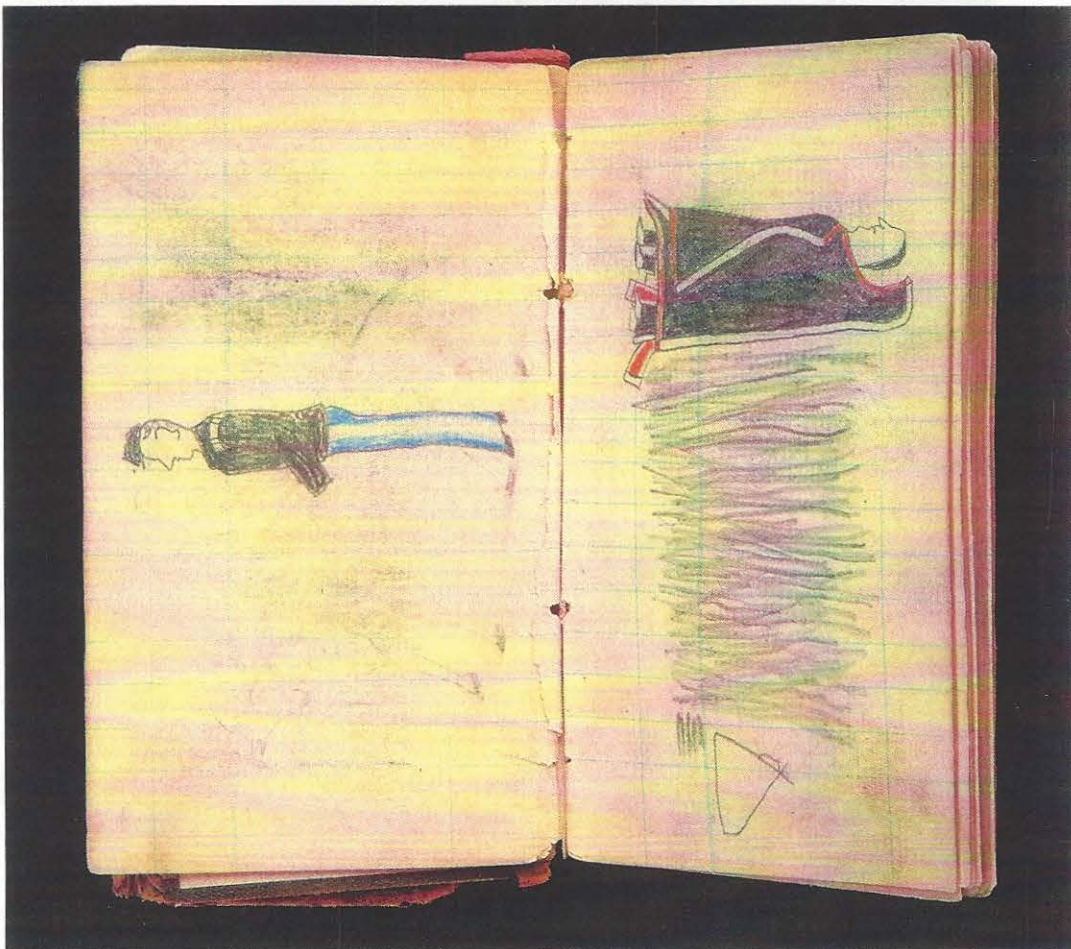
p75-76.tif



p73-74.tif



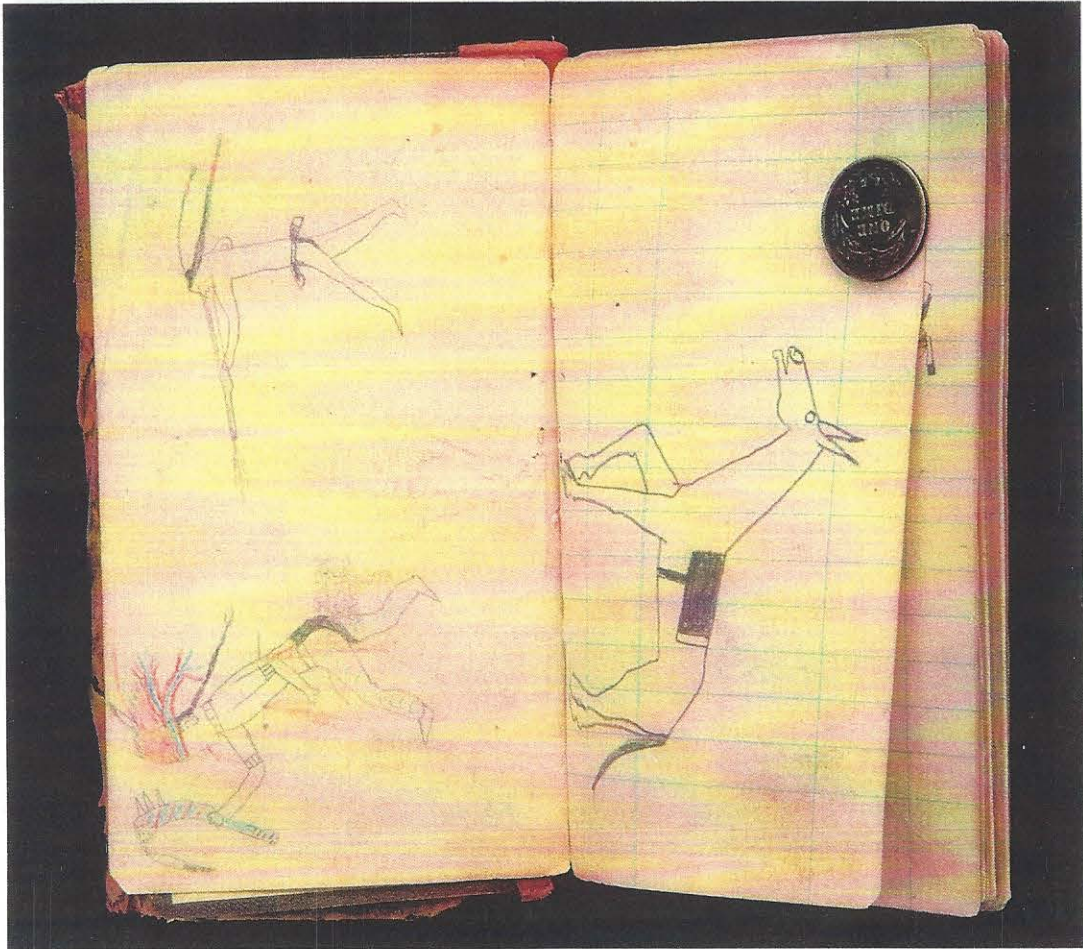
p79-80.tif



p77-78.tif



p83-84.tif



p81-82.tif

