Making Our Valley

This story was created by:

The Earth

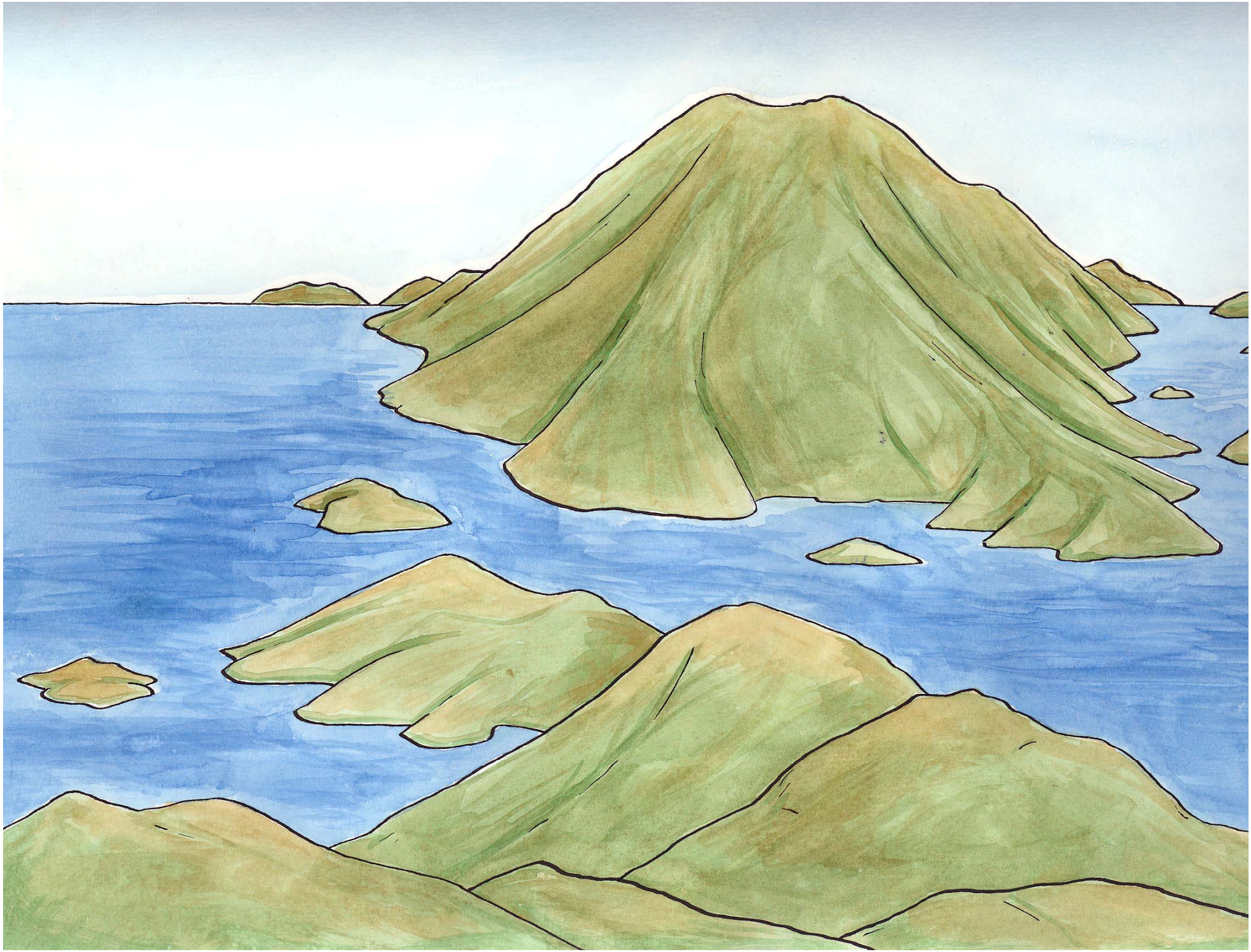
1. Ashland's Watery Beginning

A long, long time ago, if you wanted to come to Ashland, you would be swimming in the sea. That is because before anyone lived here (even before the dinosaurs) the Earth looked a lot different than it does today.

A long, long time ago, Oregon was under the ocean and the west coast of the Unites States was where Idaho is today!

Time: 200-300 million years ago
Time Period: Permian and Triassic
Action:

- place sea creatures out in the ocean
- place ferns on the land



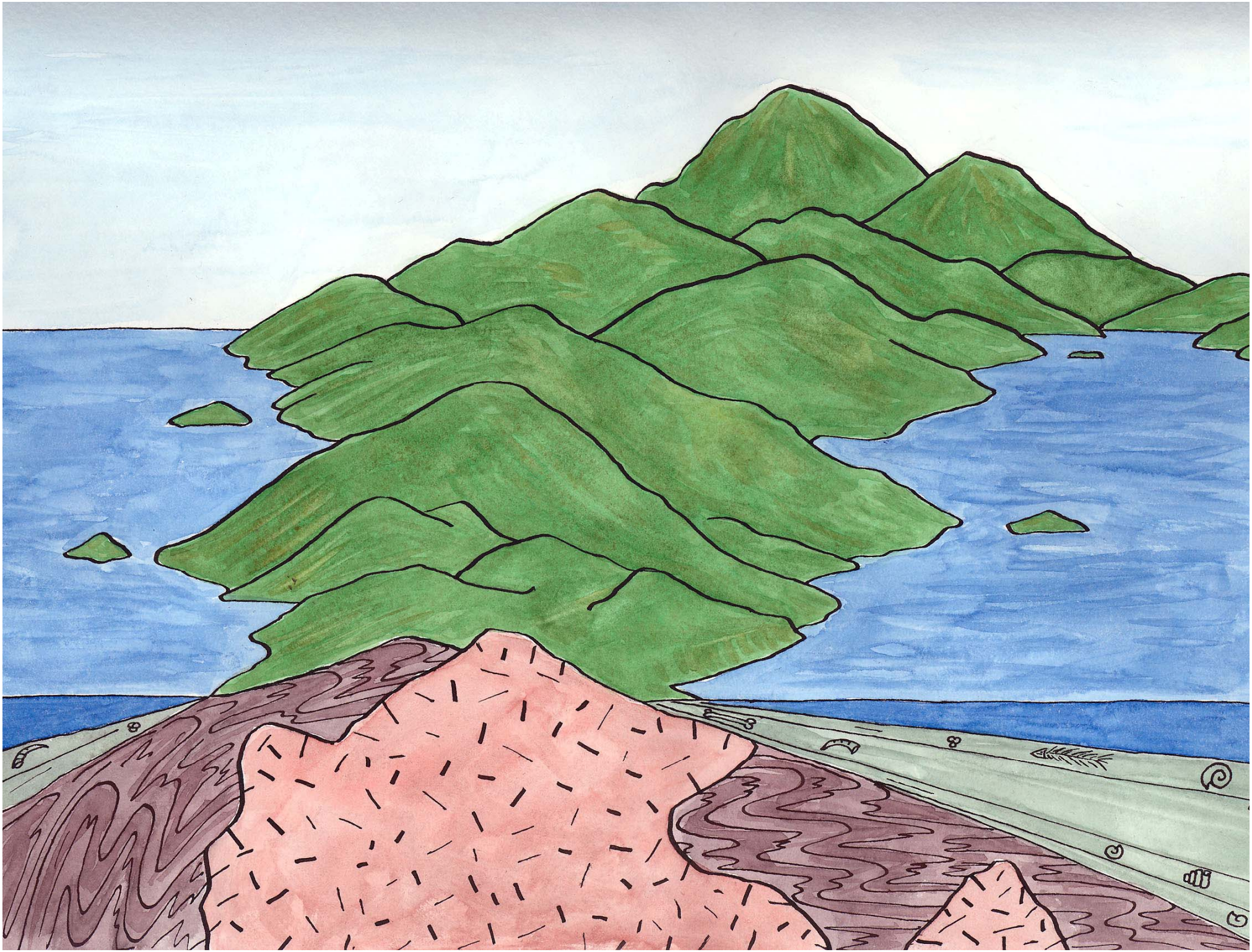
2. Islands Begin to Grow

Big plates that lie beneath the Earth's surface, some as big as a whole ocean, are always moving slowly (a few inches a year). Long ago, two big plates in our area were moving toward each other and began to crash together.

During this long and slow collision, the land on the edges of the plates crumpled up and pushed some of the land above the sea to form long chains of mountain islands. At the same time, dinosaurs were roaming along the mainland of the United States and an occasional pterosaur, or flying reptile, made it out to the islands.

Time: 160 million years ago
Time Period: Jurassic
Action:

- use the sand bucket to build a chain of mountainous islands
- put dinosaurs on the rest of the land among the ferns
- put a pterosaur on one of the islands



3. Erosion Goes to Work

Soon after these islands formed, erosion from wind, rain, and ice caused rock to tumble down the mountains. Year after year, more and more rocks rolled down from these islands and the mountains to the east. So much sediment came down that eventually the inland sea filled in. Some of the sea creatures were buried, turned to stone and became fossils.

At the same time, the land was pushing up and the islands became large mountains that we call the **Klamath Mountains**. Dinosaurs continued to roam the Earth and conifers, or cone-bearing trees, dominated the landscape.

Time: 100-70 million years ago
Time Period: Cretaceous
Action:

- erode islands and eastern mountains until the east sea is filled in
- remove sea creatures and replace with fossils
- build up the mountains to the west
- place more dinosaurs on eastern mountains
- sprinkle in conifers among the ferns

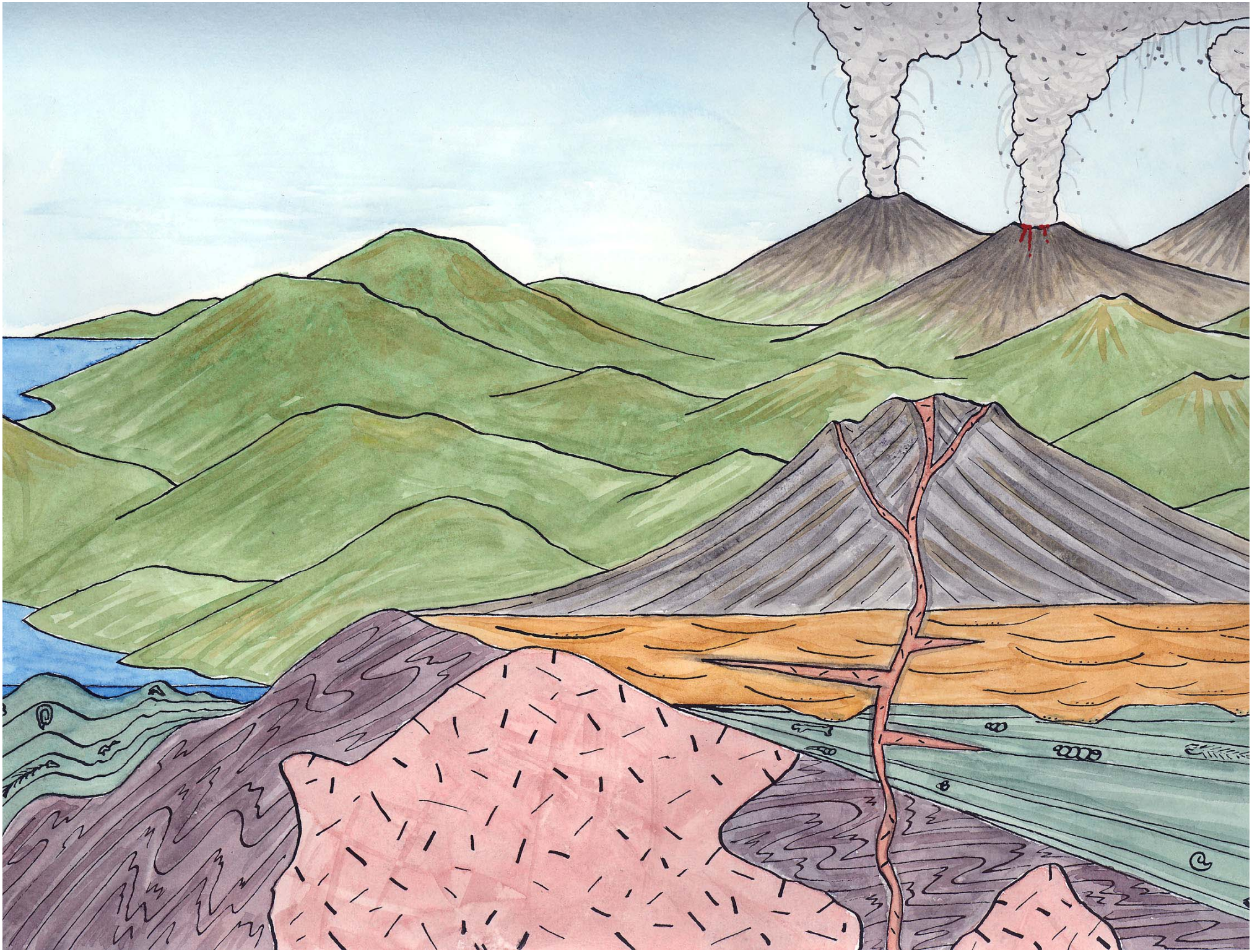
4. Great Rivers

After the sea filled in, there was a long resting period. During this time, great rivers began to flow through our area on top of the old sea sediments. The rivers flowed from south to north and carried lots of sand and gravel.

The climate was much warmer than now, and plants along the rivers were tropical. By this time, although no one knows exactly why, the dinosaurs had gone extinct. Other animals, including small horses and other mammals, became common.

Time: 40-35 million years ago
Time period: Paleogene
Action:

- create large meandering rivers along the valley floor
- place palm trees along rivers
- bury dinosaurs
- place horses on land



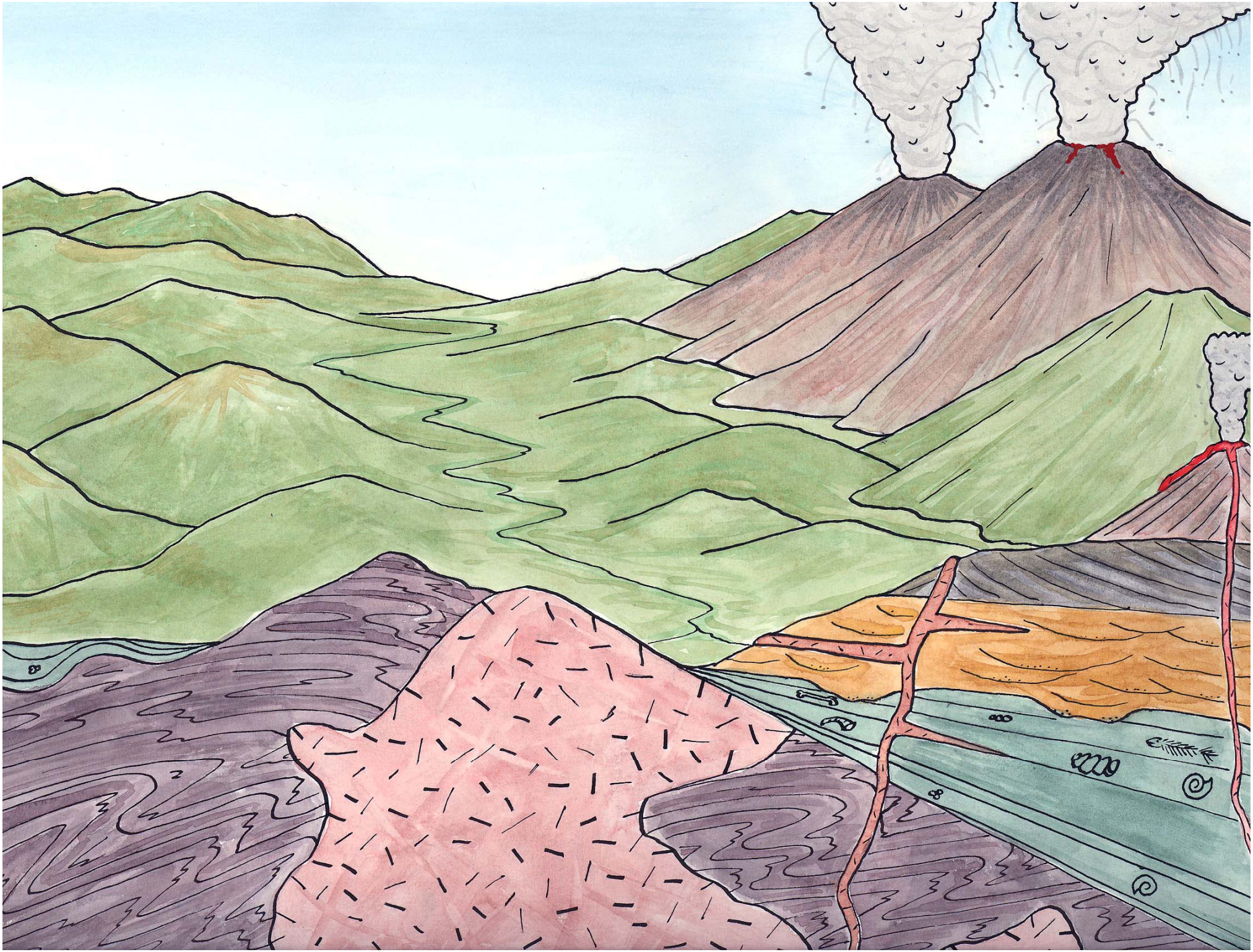
5. Cascade Volcanoes Appear

After a bit of a rest, the Earth's plates began to collide again. One plate slid under the other and buried some of the rocks. The rocks were buried deep so deep that they actually melted! Some of these melted rocks were forced out onto the Earth's surface through a series of volcanoes. As these volcanoes continued to spill lava out on the surface, they formed a new mountain chain which we call the **Western Cascades**.

At the same time, the climate began to cool and new animals, including the wooly mammoth and the saber tooth tiger, became a common sight.
Palm trees gave way to hardwoods trees, including oaks.

Time: 35-17 million years ago
Time Period: Paleogene and Neogene
Action:

- form the Western Cascades and light off a volcano
- add wooly mammoths and saber tooth cats
- remove ferns and palm trees
- add oak trees



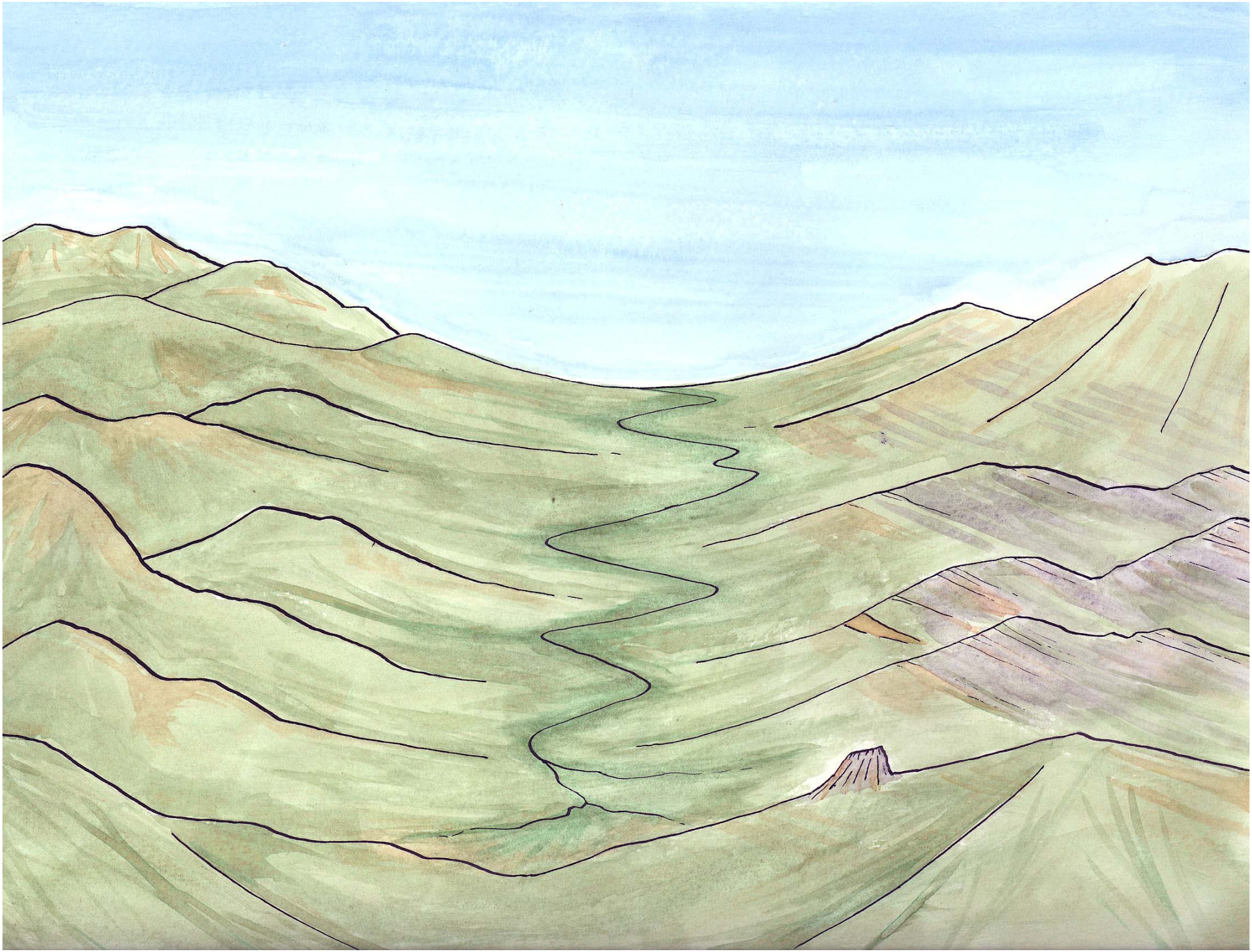
6. New Cascade Volcanoes

For a long time, the volcanoes were quiet while wind, rain and ice wore down the Western Cascade Mountains. But then the Earth's plates began to collide again, more rocks heated up and melted, and new volcanoes were built on top of the worn down Western Cascades. These new volcanoes built the **High Cascades**. One of the largest volcanos (which erupted about 7,000 years ago) was Mount Mazama, which we know today as Crater Lake.

At about the same time Mount Mazama was erupting, Bear Creek was carving our valley deeper, and the first human residents, the Native Americans, were setting up villages. Salmon became common in the rivers and streams and dogs were domesticated from wolves. No one is certain why, but many of the large mammals, including wooly mammoths and saber tooth tigers, went extinct.

Time: 17 million years ago to 7,000 years ago
Time Period: Neogene
Action:

- form the High Cascades and light off another volcano
- remove wooly mammoth and saber tooth cat
- carve out Bear Creek and place salmon in it
- set up Native American camp and add dogs



7. Ashland Today

After living a hunter-gatherer way of life in the valley for a very long time, the Native Americans began to see new and different people. The first European pioneers settled in the valley to find gold. Later, pioneer families came because the land along Bear Creek was very good for farming, and trees from the mountains were a good source of lumber to make houses and railroads.

There are still Native Americans who live in the Rogue Valley, though their populations and way of life was profoundly changed when the settlers arrived. Today, many people enjoy the valley that was formed by colliding islands, ancient sea sand, volcanoes and floods.

Time: 1830 to the present day
Action:

- bring in the wagon train
- Remove some of the Native Americans and wolves
- create the town of Ashland with houses and farm animals