

PIPESTONE

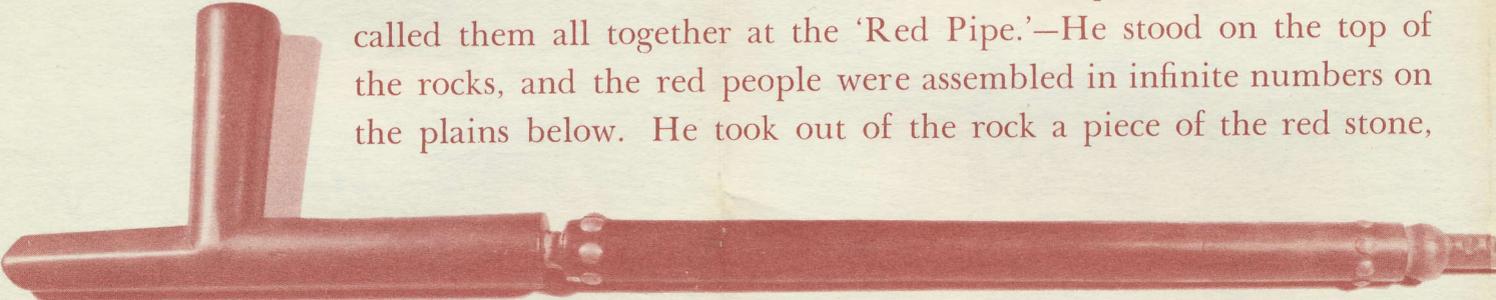
NATIONAL MONUMENT

MINNESOTA

PIPESTONE

NATIONAL
MONUMENT
MINNESOTA

Amongst the Sioux of the Mississippi, and who live in the region of the Red Pipe Stone Quarry, I found the following and not less strange tradition . . . “Many ages after the red men were made, when all the different tribes were at war, the Great Spirit sent runners and called them all together at the ‘Red Pipe.’—He stood on the top of the rocks, and the red people were assembled in infinite numbers on the plains below. He took out of the rock a piece of the red stone,



and made a large pipe; he smoked it over them all; told them that it was part of their flesh; that though they were at war, they must meet at this place as friends; that it belonged to them all; that they must make their calumets from it and smoke them to him whenever they wished to appease him or get his good-will—the smoke from his big pipe rolled over them all, and he disappeared in its cloud; at the last whiff of his pipe a blaze of fire rolled over the rocks, and melted their surface—at that moment two squaws went in a blaze of fire under the two medicine rocks, where they remain to this day, and must be consulted and propitiated whenever the pipe stone is to be taken away.”

. . . GEORGE CATLIN

The monument

For at least three centuries a large proportion of the ceremonial pipes used by Plains Indians and other tribes was produced from the unusual red stone obtained from the famed quarries near Pipestone, Minn. The prized stone was an object of reverence and the area from which it came was traditionally held in awe.

So famous was this spot that the earliest white men to visit the northern reaches of the Mississippi River heard of the site and its sacred nature. The eminent American artist, George Catlin, who traveled among and painted American Indians from 1829 to 1838, visited the site in 1836. He was intrigued by the mysteries associated with the area and, although other white men had come here before him, Catlin's description of the quarries was the first to be published. The smooth red stone is now called catlinite in his honor. Joseph Nicholas Nicollet, who headed an exploring expedition of the U.S. Government in this region, also visited the pipestone quarries, in 1838. An inscription carved into nearby quartzite ledges by members of his party may still be seen.

The stone is reserved by Federal law for Indians and is quarried by them each year under special permits issued by the National Park Service.

Popular legends relate to the quarries and to other striking geological features found in the monument, such as the Three Maidens, Lightning-Struck-Rock, Leaping Rock, Winnewissa Falls, and the Oracle. Longfellow immortalized the quarries in "The Song of Hiawatha." In 1898 John Wesley Powell, Director of the Bureau of American Ethnology, said, "The site of the quarries was a sacred place, known to the tribesmen of a large part of the continent. * * * It is not too much to say that the great Pipestone Quarry was the most important single location in aboriginal geography and lore."

The monument affords the opportunity to learn about the customs and culture of the Indians who lived in this area. Here you can see where the treasured pipestone was obtained, learn the primitive quarrying techniques, and discover how the stone was fashioned into a pipe.

The monument's significance also lies in the opportunity it offers for outdoor experience in one of southwestern Minnesota's best-preserved areas of natural beauty and interest. In addition to the quarries, you will see quartzite ledges, virgin prairie grassland, a wealth of flowering plants, and a bird population

dominated by the bobolink, ringneck pheasant, and meadowlark. The monument scenery provides an interesting change from the expanse of rolling farmlands that extend in all directions.

Tobacco, pipes, and smoking customs

Pipes and tobacco are so common today that they are taken for granted. Tobacco and its varied forms of use were borrowed, along with many important staple foods, from the Indians. Soon after the discovery of America, tobacco spread around the world and became an important article of commerce and trade. Its cultivation and sale helped to accelerate the development of the American colonies.

Among the aborigines of North America, smoking was not an indulgence for the enjoyment of the practice as it is today, but a custom almost entirely associated with ceremonies and solemn occasions. Some Indians believed the smoke carried messages and pleas to the gods. Tobacco was usually blended with sumac leaves, dogwood bark, or other aromatic ingredients to form a mixture called "kinnikinnick."

Ceremonial pipes, or calumets as they are sometimes called, were highly valued. To some Indians the pipe had a divine origin because, supposedly, it was presented to them by the sun. It was a symbol of peace and was greatly revered; many Indians believed the greatest misfortune would follow a violation of any treaty where it had been used. Historian Reuben Gold Thwaites wrote: "No such honors are paid to the crowns and scepters of kings as those they pay to it [the pipe]. It seems to be the God of peace and of war, and the arbiter of life and death. It suffices for one to carry and show it, to walk in safety and in the midst of enemies." The early French explorers carried these tobacco pipes when they made trips into unknown territories to insure their safety among the tribes with whom they came in contact.

Pipes were used for various purposes and great attention was paid to their manufacture and decoration. Those symbolizing peace and war were distinguished by the colors of the feathers which adorned them. A red feather denoted war. A pipe offered during battle might be refused, but if it were accepted, both sides laid down their weapons and peace was restored.

The pipe was also used to end quarrels between tribes or individuals, to strengthen alliances, to seal agreements and treaties, and to show peaceful intent when meeting strangers. Treaties that were solemn

nized by the ritual smoking of the pipe were seldom violated since many Indians believed the Great Spirit would never allow an infraction of this type to escape with impunity. This use has led to the expression "peace pipe," which has become a well-accepted term in American thought and speech.

The same aura of sanctity hovered over the pipestone quarries. Early Indians believed the quarries were guarded from evil intrusion by spirits who lived beneath huge glacial boulders known today as the Three Maidens. Until recent historic times only men could enter the quarries, and then only if their tobacco offerings were accepted by the spirit maidens.

Although the ancestors of the Iowa and Oto may have been the first Indians to work the quarries on a large scale, the Dakota-Sioux gained control of the quarries early in historic times, preventing other tribes from obtaining the stone except through trade.

How the pipes were produced

Indian tribes of the Great Plains may, in earlier years, have traveled to the quarries for the raw material, but in recent times the Sioux have made decorated pipes by the hundreds, trading them, as well as unfinished pipe blanks, to many tribes.

Pipes were of varied forms, depending somewhat on the tribe and on the individual doing the work. Before the introduction of steel implements by Europeans, tools made from flint or other hard minerals were used to cut and shape the relatively soft pipestone to the desired form. The pipe bowl and the shank were drilled with a chipped flint point or with a hollow reed rotated between the palms of the hands, using a few grains of sand as the cutting agent. Usually the holes were cut into rough pipe blanks so that little labor would be lost if the stone should split.

The panorama of Pipestone comes alive in this painting of George Catlin. In his own words " . . . the Indians procure the red stone for their pipes by digging through the soil and several slaty layers of the red stone."



After the bowl and shank were successfully formed, the exterior of the bowl was finished and frequently decorated with elaborate carvings, a process that often required many weeks.

After the pipe was carved, a fine, high polish was obtained by handrubbing it with oil or melted fat. A bright finish could also be obtained by polishing the pipe with a fine-grained stone or a piece of bone. Proper finishing took many hours. It is difficult to realize that these exquisitely made objects were produced with the simplest of tools. Even in today's age of mechanization, pipes are made by hand; however, simple handtools, such as saws, files, and brace and bits, have replaced the stone implements. Polishing is now accomplished by applying beeswax to the heated pipe.

Ash was long used for pipestems since its straight grain permits the wood to be split, grooved, and glued together. Sumac, however, has largely replaced ash for this purpose. It has a soft pithy core which can be easily burned out with a hot wire to provide a good pipestem. The stems were usually flat and were traditionally decorated with feathers, porcupine quills, and paint. In recent times dyed horsehair and beads have frequently been used.

The monument's geology

Many kinds of red stone, from other deposits in North America, have been used for making pipes. Few of these stones, however, are as well known or as widely used as Minnesota pipestone.

At the monument, the pipestone deposit is about a foot thick and is made up of several beds lying between massive layers of an ancient formation known as the Sioux quartzite. The exact origin of the pipestone is unknown. It is believed it was originally of a clay-like composition, buried between thick deposits of sandstone. The great weight of overlying beds, together with accompanying heat and associated chemical action, changed the sandstone to quartzite and the clay to what is now called catlinite.

The quartzite as seen today was once deeply buried. The earth's crust in this region was gradually lifted by earth forces so that most of the overlying rock was removed by erosion. This erosion brought the pipestone to within a few feet of the surface.

The pipestone stratum slopes toward the east, and early Indians probably found it exposed in gullies which had been cut through the beds of quartzite. Quarrying activities through the years have followed this incline. Today nearly 8 feet of quartzite must be removed to reach the pipestone. Only simple handtools are used to remove the overburden; explosives cannot be employed since their force would shatter the soft pipestone.

The monument's history

France was the first European country to claim ownership and to hold sovereignty over this region. Her claims were ceded to Spain following the French and Indian War. In October 1800, Napoleon Bonaparte forced Spain to "retrocede" the area to France. This territory was subsequently acquired by the United States through the Louisiana Purchase in 1803.

Because of their sacred significance and commercial importance to the Sioux, the pipestone quarries later became the subject of treaty negotiations. In 1858 the Federal Government recognized the title of the Yankton-Sioux to the quarries. Various intrusions were made upon the area, and at one time a detachment of U. S. soldiers was called in to escort surveyors and to remove settlers from parts of the reserved land.

An Indian boarding school was constructed on the reservation in 1893, but was closed after 60 years of operation. The land status of the Yankton-Sioux was, for years, under litigation; however, in 1928 their claims were extinguished for \$328,558.90.

Final preservation of the quarries and the right of Indians of all tribes to use them came with the establishment of the monument by act of Congress on August 25, 1937.

About your visit

The monument may be reached via U.S. 75 and Minn. 23 and 30. It is about a mile north of the city of Pipestone where food and overnight accommodations are available.

Be sure to make the visitor center your first stop in the monument. It is open from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. in summer and from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in winter, and contains museum exhibits, an audiovisual room where illustrated programs are presented, and administrative offices. A short trail from the visitor center leads to the exhibit quarry.

For a pleasant walk among the monument's interesting historical, geological, and biological features, take the Circle Trail from the visitor center to Lake Hiawatha, Winnewissa Falls, Leaping Rock, the Nicollet Marker, the quartzite ledges, and the pipestone quarries that are still being worked. Pick up a self-guiding trail booklet at the visitor center so you may receive the greatest enjoyment from the ¾-mile walk.

Help us preserve this area

You can help us preserve the monument's scenic beauty and natural features by observing the following regulations: Be sure that matches and cigarettes are entirely out before you dispose of them. The grasslands are subject to devastating prairie fires. Leave all rocks, flowers, trees and all other natural features just as you find them. Pets must be on leash at all times and are not permitted in the visitor center.

Administration

Pipestone National Monument, containing approximately 283 acres, is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

The National Park System, of which this area is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and inspiration of its people.

A superintendent, whose address is Pipestone, MN 56164, is in immediate charge of the monument.

America's Natural Resources

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.

U.S. Department of the Interior

National Park Service

PIPESTONE National Monument

