

# pipestone

*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 red stone, and made a large pipe; he smoked it over them all; told them that it was a 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 goodwill—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, 1836

Long before the white man reached the northern plains, Indians of many tribes were traveling as much as a thousand miles by foot to reach the sacred pipestone quarries of southwestern Minnesota. This relatively soft clay stone, deeply entwined with the spiritual lore of the tribes, was fairly easy to work, even with primitive tools.

The quarries probably were first used more than 400 years ago by ancestors of the Oto and Iowa Indians. Traditionally this was a sacred place where all Indians could come and quarry in peace, but near the middle of the 19th century the Yankton-Dakota gained control over the area and prevented other tribes from obtaining the stone except through trade. By the end of the 19th century all of the land in this part of Minnesota except for the pipestone

quarries had passed into white control. The Indians overcame many attempts to seize control of the quarries, but in 1893 they lost them when a Federal Indian School was constructed on the site and the land was taken under the laws of eminent domain. In 1928 the Indian claim to the land was dissolved with the payment of \$328,559 to the Yankton-Sioux for the "act of taking" in 1893. On August 25, 1937, Pipestone National Monument was established by an Act of Congress and the right to quarry the pipestone was granted to Indians of all tribes.

In the early 1800's, the quarries were so famous that many of the travelers into the prairies made it a point to visit the area. George Catlin, who traveled among and painted the American Indian from 1829 to 1838, visited the quarries in 1836. Although not the first white man to visit the area, he was the first person to describe the quarries in print and his pipestone sample was the first to be studied. Today, pipestone is called catlinite in his honor.

The legends describing the beginning of the quarries and how the first pipe came to the people varied from tribe to tribe, but all held the quarry in reverence. 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 much to say that the great Pipestone Quarry was the most important single location in aboriginal geography and lore."

The pipes were greatly revered and were used for various purposes—to show intentions for war and peace, to seal agreements and treaties, to strengthen alliances, or to solemnize an occasion. To many, the pipe was an altar and the smoke was an incense that carried their prayers to God. Because pipes were used frequently to seal treaties and treaties so sealed were seldom broken, all ceremonial pipes came to be known as peace pipes.

So strong and romantic was the stereotype of the Plains Indian with his peace pipe, buckskin

clothing, beads, horse, feathers, war paint, tipi, and dependence on the buffalo, that many people began to think of all Indians that way. In truth, Indians varied greatly from tribe to tribe and even more so from culture area to culture area. The southwestern Indian farmer was not at all like the Plains Indian hunter.

This stereotyped Plains Indian culture occupied but a brief moment in the history of the tribes. The culture was not possible before the Spanish reintroduced the horse in America, and once the buffalo had been exterminated it could not continue. Before the horse, the Plains Indian had lived along the streams and rivers at the edge of the plains in more or less permanent villages. They subsisted by gathering wild fruits and vegetables, gardening, fishing, hunting small game, and occasionally venturing into the open plains to hunt buffalo. Their survival was only partially dependent on the buffalo.

A great change took place with the reintroduction of the horse, a change which brought new lore and traditions and created new needs and methods of coping with them. Now the Indian could follow the buffalo herds as they migrated with the seasons. He came to depend almost completely on the buffalo to provide food, clothes and shelter. His subsistence lost diversity.

When the first horses arrived on the plains about the middle of the 17th century, there were an estimated 30 million to 100 million buffalo. By 1883, only a few scattered survivors remained. Black Elk, a Dakota holy man, described the end as he witnessed it:

"That fall, 1883, they say, the last of the bison herds was slaughtered by the wasichus—white men. I can remember when the bison were so many that they could not be counted, but more and more wasichus came to kill them until there were only heaps of bones scattered where they used to be. The wasichus did not kill them to eat; they killed them for the metal that makes them crazy, and they took only the hides to sell. Sometimes they did not even

take the hides, only the tongues; and I have heard the fireboats came down the Missouri River loaded with dried bison tongues . . . . Sometimes they did not even take the tongues; they just killed and killed because they liked to do that. When we hunted bison, we killed only what we needed. And when there was nothing left but heaps of bones, the wasichus came and gathered up even the bones and sold them. All our people were settling down in square grey houses, scattered here and there across the hungry land."

Gone was the buffalo and with it a way of life. The end of the Plains Indian culture was near. An attempt at revival was made with the Ghost Dance—The Messiah Dream. The Indians hoped to revive the buffalo and allow their culture to continue. But the massacre at Wounded Knee, in which U.S. soldiers killed more than 200 Sioux men, women, and children, removed even this last hope. The Plains Indian, as anyone in a changed environment, had to adapt—or die.

The Plains Indian went to the reservations. He adapted to reservation ways. Many of the very specialized crafts that depended on the buffalo or on products of the buffalo immediately stopped.

*The catlinite bowl of Chief Pebriska-Ruhpa's pipe is decorated with metal inlays. This watercolor was done by Swiss artist Charles Bodmer in 1833.*

Northern National Gas Company Collection,  
Joselyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska



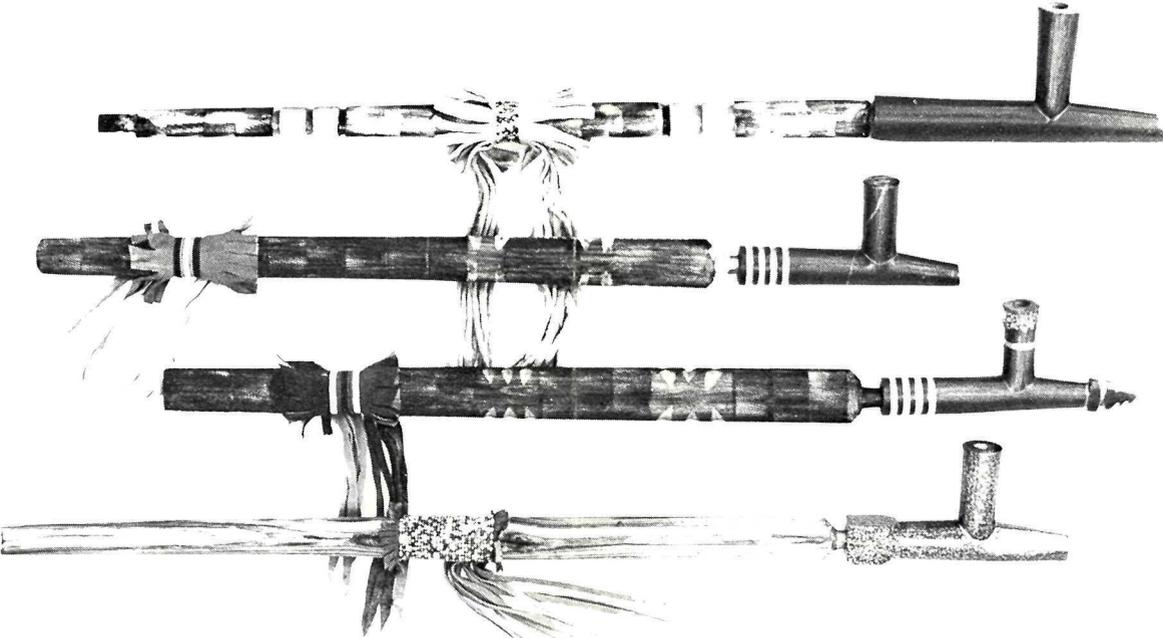
No longer could the Indians make bison horn spoons; bison bone beads, needles and awls; or glue from bison eyes, skulls, or hooves. No longer could parts of the buffalo such as the skull be decorated to play an important part in religious ceremonies. The buffalo was dead.

Other crafts, such as beadwork, quillwork, pipemaking, leatherwork, and basketry, continued. Today many of these are beginning to die out. It was in part to keep alive these remnants of this proud heritage that the Upper Midwest Indian Cultural Center was built in 1972 at Pipestone National Monument. The center creates a market for crafts and makes sure that the skills are passed on from generation to generation.

**Of Pipes and Plains**

The Indian Cultural Center has space for craftsmen to show how their traditional arts are made. When live demonstrations are not possible, videotaped replays of them will give visitors a greater understanding and appreciation of the individual crafts of the Upper Midwest Indians. One of the crafts demonstrated is pipe making.

*T-shaped bowls were a popular style and became known as the Plains, or Sioux, pipes. Both the bowls and the wooden stems were often decorated.*



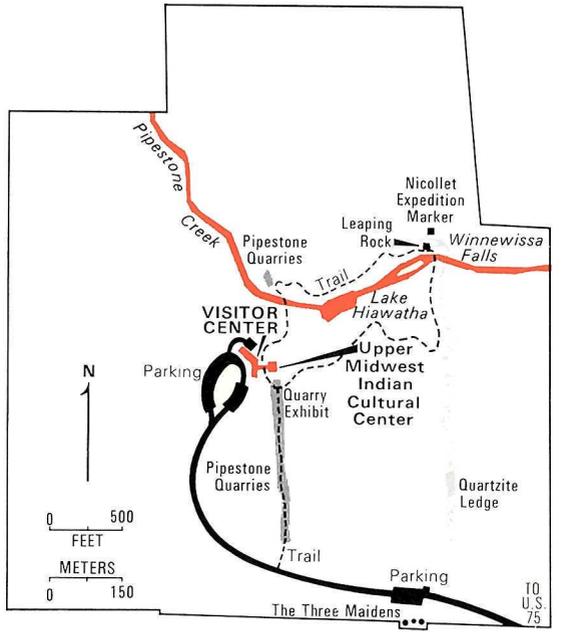
Today ordinary hand carpenter tools are used instead of the stone tools of earlier times. The methods and techniques, however, remain much the same. The craftsman starts with a rough block of the thinly bedded stone as it comes from the quarry. On this he marks the rough outline of the pipe he intends to make, which he then saws to form a "pipe blank." The pipe is usually drilled then so that little work would be lost if the stone were to split. After drilling, the pipe is shaped with files, rasps, and knives. Upon completion it is sanded smooth, heated and finished with beeswax, which is set by immersing in cold water.

Flint knives, quartzite or sandstone rasps, stone-pointed drills and buffalo tallow for finishing were used formerly. Otherwise the process is much the same today as it was then.

The stone comes from a thinly bedded layer about 12 to 18 inches thick sandwiched between massive layers of a much harder stone called Sioux Quartzite. It is believed that the pipestone was a clay material and that the quartzite was a sand deposited at the bottom of the sea about 1.2 billion years ago. Other sediments buried these beds deep beneath the earth's surface, and, in time, heat, pressure, and chemical action changed the sand into quartzite and the clay into pipestone. Later, pressures beneath the surface began to cause these beds to fold and uplift. Gradually the forces of erosion wore away the overlying beds of stone until pipestone was exposed in an area more deeply cut than others. The Indians probably first saw the stone in Pipestone Creek.

The bed of pipestone in the park slopes to the east, so as the Indians continue to dig the stone, they have to dig deeper and deeper to reach it. In some areas, nearly 12 feet of quartzite must be removed. Heavy equipment and explosives are not allowed in the quarry operations, for they would shatter the soft, brittle pipestone.

**Something For Everyone**



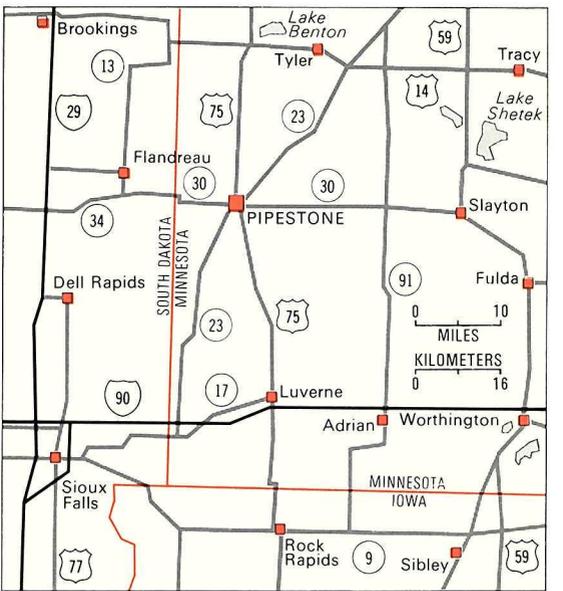
Pipestone National Monument has something for nearly everyone. Besides the interesting geology, history, archeology, and the pipestone crafts, the park offers an opportunity to observe, appreciate, and learn about the natural environment. Walking around the 3/4-mile scenic trail is almost like wandering into a different world. A wide variety of bird and animal life abounds. A small section of virgin prairie, a relic of the past, survives. Plant communities and their ecological niche and importance to the Indian can be observed and studied by means of the trail labels. One's imagination will allow him to see interesting profiles in the quartzite ledge, and to imagine the scene in earlier times. Inscriptions from the last century are reminders that this is historic ground: Joseph Nicollet, "C. F." for John Charles Fremont, Fed-

eral Expedition July 1, '38 . . . Garrett '82 . . . C. W. Doaslaugh August 17, 1890 . . . 1891 . . . 1896 . . . 1908.

One can feel alone and a part of the scheme of the world as he rests by the beautiful Winnewissa Falls and enjoys the natural beauty around him.

The visitor center and cultural center, open from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. in the summer and from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the winter, should be your first stop. At the visitor center are museum exhibits, an audiovisual program, administrative offices and the Upper Midwest Indian Cultural Center. Rangers will assist you with any questions you may have and will provide you with trail guide booklets for the 3/4-mile self-guiding trail that takes you past the quarries and many other scenic or historic points of interest.

Food and lodging accommodations are available in Pipestone and other surrounding communities.



**HELP PRESERVE THE AREA**  
The National Park Service is dedicated to preserving irreplaceable parts of our American heritage for enjoyment today and in the future. You can help by leaving the pipestone where you see it; only Indians are allowed to remove it and then only by permit. In fact, all other natural and historical features—rocks, flowers, trees, or antiquities—should be left where you see them. Dispose of matches and cigarettes safely. Keep all pets leashed and outside of the buildings. Stay on hard-surfaced trail at all times.

**FOR YOUR SAFETY**  
Do not let an accident spoil your visit. There are hazards that require your alertness and attention although efforts have been made to provide for your safety. Exercise common sense and return home safely.

**ADMINISTRATION**  
Pipestone National Monument, containing 283 acres, is adjacent to the north side of the City of Pipestone, which can be reached by U.S. 75, and Minnesota 23 and 30. The park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Pipestone, MN 56164, is in immediate charge.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities to protect and conserve our land and water, energy and minerals, fish and wildlife, park and recreation areas, and for the wise use of all those resources. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

National Park Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR