

Pipestone

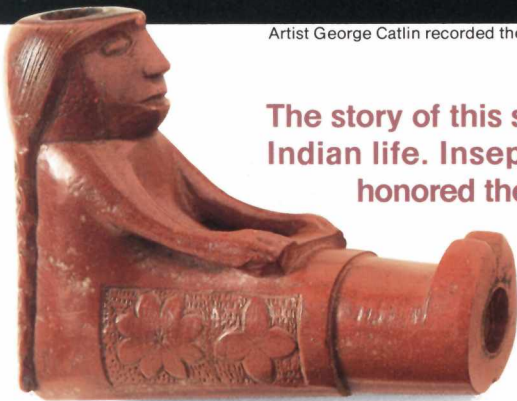
National Monument
Minnesota

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Official Map and Guide



Artist George Catlin recorded the activity at the pipestone quarries in 1836. *Smithsonian Institution.*



The story of this stone and the pipes made from it spans four centuries of Plains Indian life. Inseparable from the traditions that structured daily routine and honored the spirit world, pipes figured prominently in the ways of the village and in dealings between tribes. The story parallels that of a culture in transition: the evolution of the pipes influenced—and was influenced by—their makers' association with white explorers, traders, soldiers, and settlers.

A Santee Sioux pipe bowl depicts a woman using a skin-dressing tool. *Smithsonian Institution.*

*At an ancient time the Great Spirit, in the form of a large bird, stood upon the wall of rock and called all the tribes around him, and breaking out a piece of the red stone formed it into a pipe and smoked it, the smoke rolling over the whole multitude. He then told his red children that this red stone was their flesh, that they were made from it, that they must all smoke to him through it, that they must use it for nothing but pipes: and as it belonged alike to all the tribes, the ground was sacred, and no weapons must be used or brought upon it—*Sioux account of the origin of the pipestone, as recorded by George Catlin, 1836.

Across the Great Plains, the stories of the pipestone differ from Sioux to Crow, from Blackfoot to Pawnee. Variation is one indication of the geographical extent to which the red stone and pipes were used and traded. The reverence with which the stories are passed down through generations is testimony to their importance.

Stone pipes were long known among the prehistoric peoples of North America; specimens from 2,000 years ago have been found at Mound City in present-day Ohio. Digging at this Minnesota quarry likely began in the 17th century, a time which coincided with the acquisition of metal tools from European traders. Carvers prized this durable yet relatively soft stone, which ranged in color from mottled pink to brick red. By all accounts this location came to be the preferred source of pipestone among the Plains tribes. By about 1700, though, the Dakota Sioux controlled the quarries and distributed the stone only through trade.

Ceremonial smoking marked the activities of the Plains people: rallying forces for warfare, trading goods and hostages, ritual dancing, and medicine ceremonies. Bowls, stems, and tobacco were stored in animal-skin pouches or in bundles with other sacred objects. Ashes were disposed of only in special places. Ornamental pipes were often valued possessions buried with the dead. There were as many variations in pipe design as there were makers. By the time George Catlin arrived here in 1836, the simple tubes of earlier times had developed into elbow and disk forms, as well as elaborate animal and human effigies. The Pawnee and Sioux were master effigy carvers. A popular pipe form was the T-shaped calumet (pictured on the reverse side). Calumets became widely known as peace pipes because they were the pipes whites usually encountered at treaty ceremonies.

As America grew westward in the 19th century, pipes found their way into white society through trade. Increasing contact between whites and Indians inspired new subject matter for carvers. Sometimes these effigies honored white politicians and explorers; sometimes the images were caricatures far from flattering. Pipes became a source of income for their makers, thus significant beyond religious use. To protect their source, the Yankton Sioux secured free and unrestricted access by an 1858 treaty. Even as the quarry became increasingly lucrative, American settlement threatened to consume the square-mile Indian claim. Outsiders were digging new pits and extracting the sacred stone. In 1928 the Yanktons, now resettled on a res-

ervation 150 miles away, sold their claim to the federal government. Pipestone National Monument was signed into existence in 1937 and opened to the public with quarrying limited to Indians.

Plains Indian culture has undergone radical change since the era of the free-ranging buffalo herds, yet pipecarving is by no means a lost art. Carvings today are appreciated as artworks as well as for ceremonial use. Once again, as commanded by the spirit bird in the Sioux story of its creation, the pipestone here is quarried by anyone of Indian ancestry. An age-old tradition continues in the modern world, ever changing yet firmly rooted in the past.



Pehriska-Ruhpa, a member of the Minnetaree tribe, donned ceremonial dress for this 1833 portrait by Karl Bodmer. *Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska.*

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About Your Visit

Getting here Pipestone National Monument is located in southwestern Minnesota, just north of the city of Pipestone. Follow signs from U.S. 75, Minn. 23, or Minn. 30.

When to visit The Park is open every day of the week throughout the year, with the exception of Christmas and New Year's days. Visiting hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; hours are extended in summer.

Things to do Begin your tour at the visitor center. Uniformed rangers will provide informa-

tion and answer questions. The exhibits and slide program introduce visitors to the history and cultural significance of this area.

The Upper Midwest Indian Cultural Center sponsors demonstrations of pipemaking by native craftworkers using the stone from this quarry.

The ¾-mile self-guiding Circle Trail begins at the visitor center and loops through the quarry passing sites of historic and scenic interest. A trail guide is available at the visitor center. Keep in

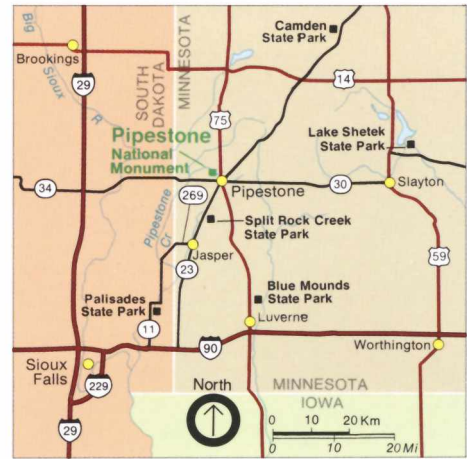
mind that the grounds are still used by native Americans for a variety of cultural and religious activities. *Note: It is unlawful to remove the pipestone except by permit.*

Disabled access The parking lot, visitor center, and restrooms are accessible to those in wheelchairs. The self-guiding trail is also wheelchair accessible.

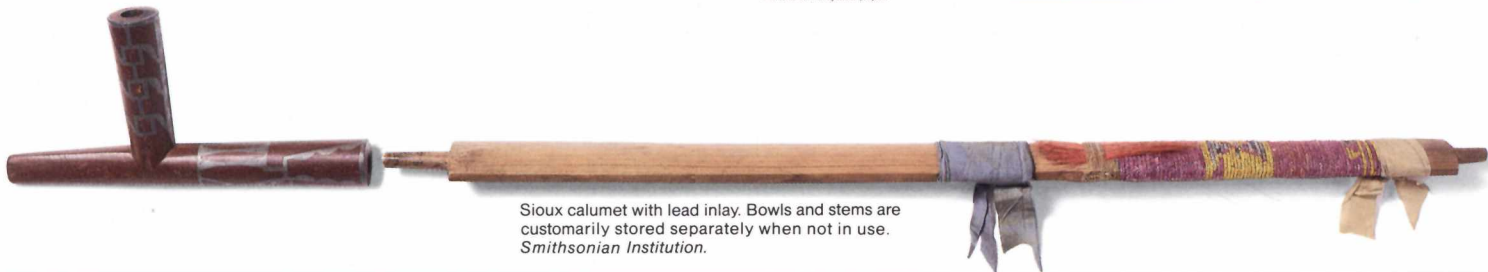
Administration Pipestone National Monument is part of the National Park System, one of more than 370 parks that are important examples of our nation's

natural and cultural heritage. For more information, write: Superintendent, Pipestone National Monument, 36 Reservation Avenue, Pipestone, MN 56164-1269. Information is also available at www.nps.gov/pipe on the Internet.

For your safety Stay on the hard-surfaced trails as you tour the park. Do not climb into the quarry pits. Watch your footing; trail surfaces may be uneven. The entrance stairs to the exhibit quarry are slippery when wet. Do not let an accident spoil your visit.



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Sioux calumet with lead inlay. Bowls and stems are customarily stored separately when not in use. Smithsonian Institution.

Carving pipes from stone

The work of native American pipecarvers takes many forms. Since the mid-19th century, the inverted T-shaped calumet has been perhaps the shape most recognizable as Plains Indian work. Metal tools ac-

quired from white traders in historic times facilitated more detailed carving, but even in many highly ornate effigy pipes the basic calumet shape is distinct.

Today craftsmen use power saws and drills for speed and precision. Though tools are more sophisticated, the process is similar to that of the age when carving implements were made of stone and wood. These drawings illustrate how calumets might be made without modern technology.

Carving the bowl Using a sharpened rock, the carver outlines the bowl on a rectangle of pipestone about 6 inches long. Excess stone is cut away (1). The relatively soft pipe-

stone yields to a flint "saw," as the carver forms the rough bowl.

At this stage the carver rounds the edges (2) by scraping the bowl against stone—perhaps a chunk of quartzite removed during quarrying.



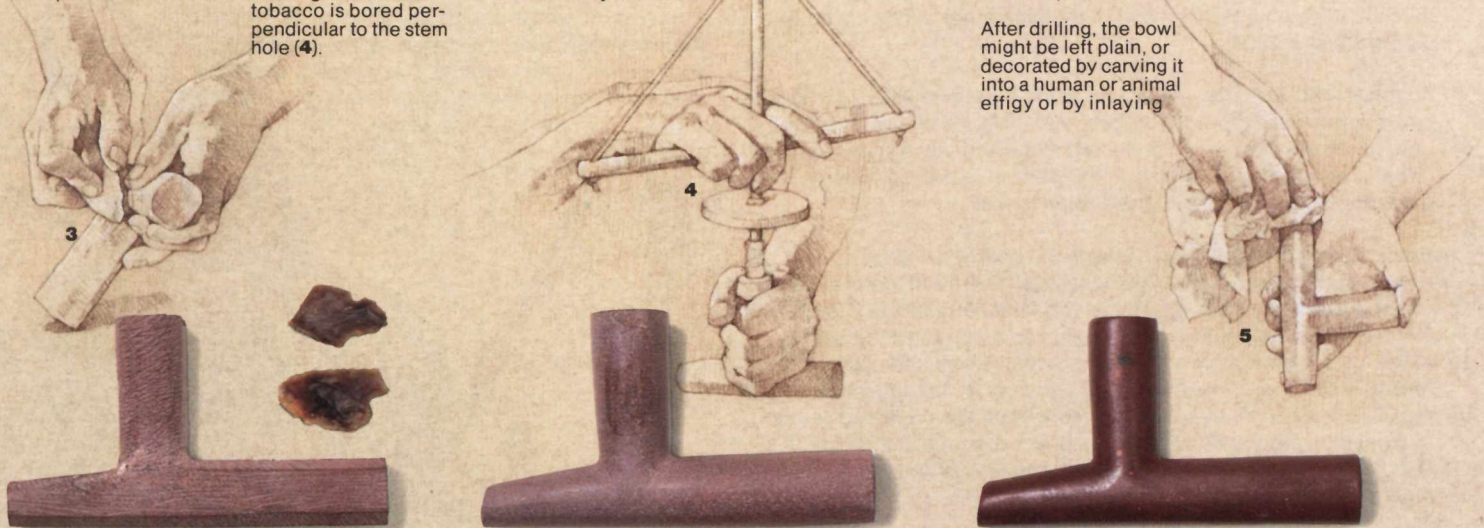
The shape is further refined by filing (3). Carvers sometimes postpone filing until after drilling, since the boring process can split the stone. The

bowl is secured to prevent movement as the stem hole is drilled through the longer leg of the inverted T; a connecting shaft to hold tobacco is bored perpendicular to the stem hole (4).

The hand drill shown is wooden with a flint bit and leather thong. George Catlin in 1841 described a drilling process whereby the carver

rolled a sharpened stick between his hands; sand and water poured in the hole intensified the abrasive action of the wooden point.

bands of metal. Finally, the pipe is polished with a sand rubbing, then buffed to a gloss (5).



Digging the pipestone Late summer and fall are the most desirable times to dig; at other times of the year water collects in the pits. After the soil is shoveled away, the top layer of quartzite is broken up carefully with a sledge hammer and wedge to minimize damage to the relatively soft pipestone underneath.

Since the pipestone bed slopes downward to the east, quarryers must dig through an increasingly thick layer of quartzite as they quarry new pipestone. Under the quartzite are 1- to 3-inch sheets of catlinite. Quarryers lift the broken sheets from the pits, then cut them into smaller blocks from which the pipes are carved.

Quarrying here has always been accomplished with respect for the earth and for what it yields. The Sioux traditionally leave an offering of food and tobacco beside the group of boulders known as the Three Maidens in return for this land's gift of stone.

Making the stem Stems are hewn from branches of ash or other hardwood. After rough shaping, the branch is split lengthwise. The pith is scraped from both halves to create a narrow shaft. The halves are rejoined and secured with a sap glue and cord.

Alternatively, a heated wire is run through the core of a sumac branch to burn out the pith, eliminating the need to split the stem.

Traditionally, Plains women "dressed" the stem by wrapping porcupine quills around part of its length. Paint, carvings, feathers, beads, and even animal heads adorned the stem and signified the pipe's ceremonial role.



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Illustration by Greg Harlin