

Pipestone

National Monument
Minnesota

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



QUARRYING: THE UNBROKEN LEGACY

For many centuries, pipestone has been an item of ceremonial importance as well as an object of trade for the tribal groups of the Great Plains. The actual quarrying of this stone is often an unappreciated part of the tradition surrounding pipestone and pipestone crafts. The task of extracting pipestone from the earth is a very difficult one and the hand tools used today are not much more advanced than the tools and methods used in centuries past. The quarrying process is a slow one, and the long, hard hours put in by those who extract the stone often go unnoticed. Quarrying is the first and most basic step of the pipestone tradition. The beautiful pipestone crafts that many of us see are merely the final result of a long process that begins with the monumental effort and the unyielding dedication of the pipestone quarriers.

MANY TRIBES - MANY TRADITIONS



The Iowa and Oto are believed to be the first tribal groups to quarry the pipestone. George Catlin also recorded the Sioux, Mandan, Ponca, and Sauk and Fox peoples as being some of the earliest tribes to quarry the pipestone. By the 1700's, the Yankton Sioux had laid claim to the quarries, but the Sisseton-Wahpeton, Santee and Flandreau also utilized the quarries. Pipestone was traded extensively throughout most of North America. Eastern Dakota tribes traded pipes with western tribes such as the Tetons at the James River Rendezvous which occurred every year until white intrusion into the area became too powerful. By the late 1800's, groups of Sioux still came to quarry on a yearly basis. By 1878,

pipestone commerce had advanced a great deal. The Flandreau people used pipestone articles for small loans and even boarded trains to sell souvenirs to the passengers. In 1911, the tradition of large groups coming to quarry the pipestone came to an end. Although individual people and smaller groups would continue to quarry the stone even to this day, it was a group of Yankton Elders led by Hollow Horn that became the last large group of Native Americans to visit the quarries and extract the stone.

EARLY QUARRIERS



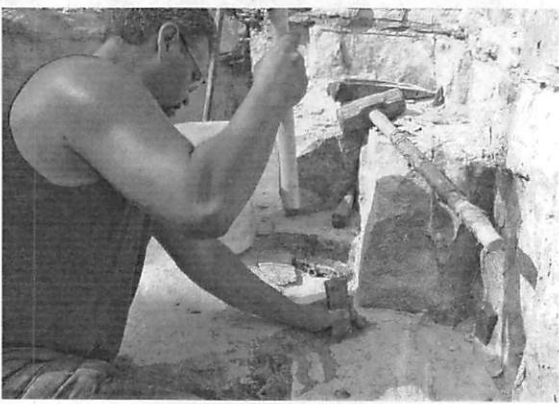
Joe Taylor, a Mdewakanton Sioux, was probably the most active quarrier in the area until around 1933. Taylor, as well as others who would follow him, quarried in small family groups. James Balmer, the superintendent of the nearby Indian school, administered the quarrying operation until 1937 when the National Park Service took over. The number of quarriers declined drastically during World War II. Albert Drysdale, the park custodian, issued the first quarrying permit in 1946 with one major stipulation: any pipestone quarried had to be used for making pipes and other articles associated with Indian folklore. Interest in quarrying remained at a low level into the early 1950's with no more than four permits issued for any given year.

Three local Chippewa and Sioux families – the Bryans, Derbys, and Taylors – kept the craft of pipe-making alive during the 1950's. For the most part, these crafters learned to carve from their ancestors as the skill was passed from generation to generation. Up until the mid-1960's, the pipestone quarries were worked by a small group of men who used the same quarry pits each year. The number of quarriers, however, jumped from ten to twenty-three between 1966 and 1973 as more Native American families from regional reservations began to develop an interest in pipestone.

TODAY'S QUARRIERS

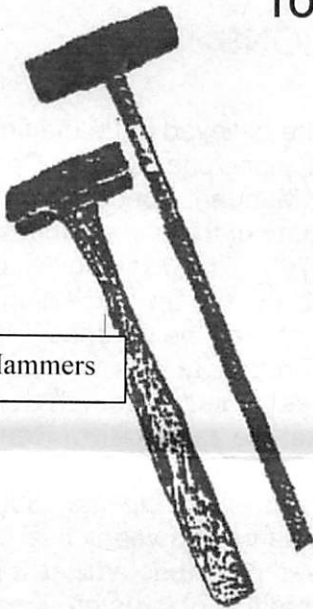


In recent years, the number of quarrying permits issued by the park has ranged from anywhere between thirty and forty. Most of today's quarriers are from the Dakotas, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Nebraska, and other parts of the central USA but individuals do sometimes come from farther away.



The best way to learn about quarrying is to observe someone working the stone. A few quarriers work off and on throughout the year, though most quarrying is done in the fall. If you are visiting at a time when no one is working the stone, ask for the video on quarrying, which is available in the Visitor Center.

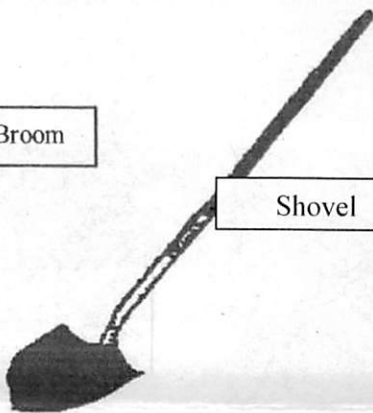
TOOLS USED FOR QUARRYING



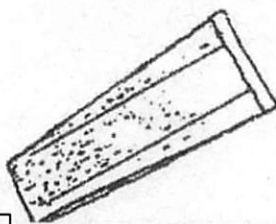
Sledge Hammers



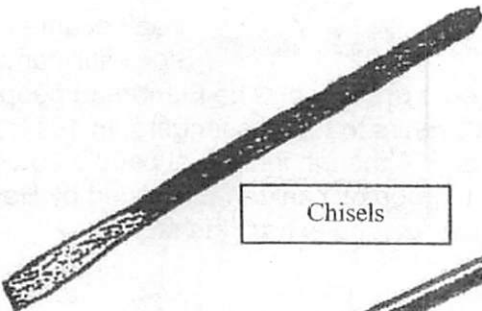
Whisk Broom



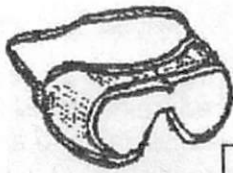
Shovel



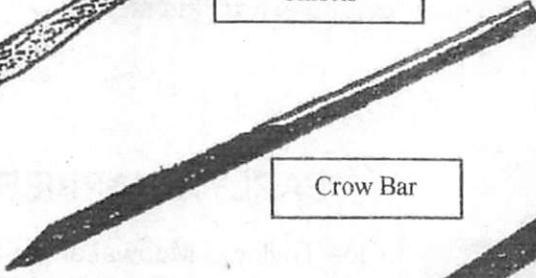
Wedges



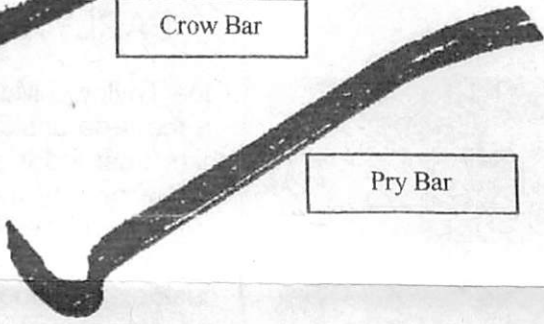
Chisels



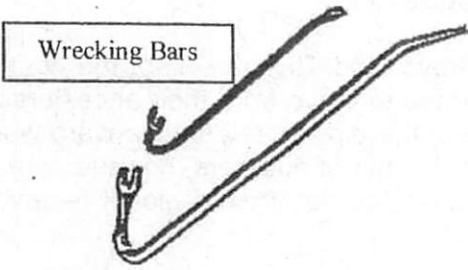
Safety Glasses



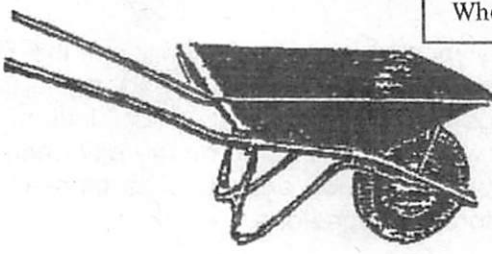
Crow Bar



Pry Bar



Wrecking Bars



Wheel Barrow