

PIPESTONE MISSION 66 RESTROOM
Pipestone National Monument
36 Reservation Avenue
Pipestone
Pipestone County
Minnesota

HABS MN-169
HABS MN-169

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
Interior Regions 3, 4, and 5
U.S. Department of the Interior
601 Riverfront Drive
Omaha, NE 68102

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

PIPESTONE MISSION 66 RESTROOM

HABS No. MN-169

Location: Pipestone National Monument, 36 Reservation Avenue, Pipestone, Pipestone County
Minnesota

USGS Pipestone North Quadrangle – Minnesota 7.5 Minute Series, 2010
UTM: Zone 14, Easting 714646, Northing 4876350 (NAD 83)

Significance: The Pipestone Mission 66 development is significant as an early example of a complete Mission 66 treatment at a small cultural park. The development is eligible under National Register of Historic Places criterion A, as the Mission 66 program changed Pipestone from an underdeveloped park to a classic National Park Service (NPS) visitor experience. Moreover, park managers used Pipestone as a success story to promote Mission 66 to Congress and to the public. The development is also eligible under criterion C, as an example of “Park Service Modern” design at a small park. The planning and development at Pipestone epitomized the team design process of Mission 66, featured a design by a leading NPS architect, John Cabot of the Eastern Office of Design, and reflected understated contemporary architecture in harmony with the park landscape.

Description: A visitor center, located at the heart of the park atop an historic quarry, and a staff residence designed to Mission 66 housing standards were the two largest and most visible construction projects associated with the Mission 66 program. Infrastructure improvements were also part of this stage of Pipestone’s development. “Mission 66 for Pipestone National Monument” gives further details: “Access to the Visitor Center will be afforded by a hard-surfaced road entering from the southeast corner of the Monument to swing on a long curve from the westerly to northerly, terminating in a parking area sufficient in size to accommodate the normal crowds. This road will take place of the unsatisfactory existing Monument road, which will be obliterated and restored to prairie. Where the road passes the Three Maidens formation, a small parking area will be provided.”¹ The small parking area created near Three Maidens also offered a small, three-room comfort station for those picnicking at the area or in need of a restroom while away from the visitor center.

The small rectangular restroom facility, constructed in 1956, is located in the picnic area adjacent to the Three Maidens site. Like the visitor center, the restrooms are constructed of standard running bond brick with Sioux quartzite stone facing. The three-room structure is topped with a shed roof.²

History: Located in the southwest corner of Minnesota, the Pipestone area had been a sacred place for American Indians for hundreds of years. Long before it became a National Monument, tribes from around the country traveled miles to the site to quarry sacred pipestone. After being designated a National Monument in 1937, and categorized as a small, cultural park, the monument was mostly overlooked by the NPS. It would not be until the 1950s before any true park development occurred.

¹ “Mission 66 for Pipestone National Monument,” U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, General Box E, File E1491, Pipestone National Monument.

² Kathleen Fitzgerald, “Pipestone National Monument: Cultural Landscape Inventory,” National Park Service, Washington D.C., 2011, 60.

The situation changed in 1951, when Conrad Wirth became Director of the NPS. In the interest of both modernizing the national parks and making them available to larger crowds of visitors, Wirth spearheaded the development of the Mission 66 program. It was under this program that Pipestone received funding for major developments.

Over a two-year period, 1957-58, an NPS team designed and managed the construction of the Mission 66 facilities and completely transformed the visitor experience at Pipestone National Monument. This included the new visitor center, administrative offices, maintenance facilities, a new entrance road and parking lots, improvements to the quarry exhibit and trail system, and a new residence near the previous park housing.

After the shortages and struggles of the Great Depression and World War II, Americans of the late 1940s and 1950s were ready to engage in leisure and recreation. At that time, car ownership was increasing exponentially across the United States and the developing interstate highway system allowed for accelerated travel across the country. Annual visits to national parks jumped from 3.5 million in 1931 to 30 million in 1948.³ By 1950, 99 percent of visitors arrived in national parks by automobile.⁴

Despite the large rise in attendance, government funding for parks within the NPS remained low, and in some cases, funding was less than what was received during the 1930s.⁵ Park concessions and visitor areas were unable to handle the influx of modern park visitors because they did not have enough staff to handle the increase in interpretive and custodial operations. In addition, older roads and trails were not equipped to handle the surge of automobiles and larger crowds.

Lack of funding for park operations soon became an issue for the American public. In 1953, Bernard DeVoto of *Harper's Magazine* wrote an article that highlighted the national parks' deterioration. In "Let's Close the National Parks," DeVoto called for park activities to be shut down, which he said would save them from further harm. In the meantime, the NPS could work to procure the additional funding needed to properly manage the parks.⁶ Similar articles soon followed. It was not just poor funding that these writers complained about, they also argued that the parks were losing the very core values that visitors were meant to experience.⁷ In response to this criticism, Director Conrad L. Wirth crafted a program that would increase Congressional funding to the parks.⁸

Wirth was born in 1899, and grew up in Minnesota, where his father was a well-known superintendent of the Minneapolis park system. Wirth studied landscape architecture at

³ Sarah Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers: The History of a Building Type* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2000), 1.

⁴ Ethan Carr, *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2007), 5.

⁵ Ibid., 4.

⁶ Ibid., 6-7.

⁷ Ibid., 55.

⁸ Ibid., 57.

Massachusetts Agricultural College (now the University of Massachusetts). In 1931, he began working for the NPS under the recommendation of Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr. In 1933, Wirth became chief director of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) program in state parks and was appointed director of the NPS in 1951.⁹

In February 1955, Wirth began to develop a comprehensive project for the entire National Park System that could respond to the modernization occurring in the United States and incorporate it into NPS plans and facilities. To accomplish these goals without having to submit a yearly budget to the U.S. Congress and wait for passage, Wirth preemptively asked for funding for an entire decade as a way to ensure enough money to modernize the parks.¹⁰ The program was to receive money slowly over the following decade and use that funding for updating park buildings, structures, roads, and concessions, along with hiring new staff. Named Mission 66, the project would launch in 1956, and conclude in 1966, in conjunction with the fiftieth anniversary of the Organic Act and the establishment of the national parks. After several dry runs and administrative delays, Wirth introduced Mission 66 to President Eisenhower and his cabinet on January 27, 1956. The program received immediate approval from the President. The necessary documents for final authorization were signed in early February.¹¹

In the 1920s, the NPS had developed its “rustic” style, which emphasized the use of natural materials that blended into the surrounding landscape. The rustic style included using pueblo design on buildings in the southwestern parks and using mountain lodges in the northwestern parks. Although NPS architects were familiar with modern architecture in the 1930s, they chose to reject it on its aesthetic values as not appropriate for a natural environment.¹² In contrast, Mission 66 buildings were intended to stand apart from their settings and to be more obvious as park visitor centers. Instead of blending into the national area, visitor centers also became less ornamented and used more man-made material, also indicative of the modern style.

While NPS architects embraced modernism in the design of visitor centers, construction and cost were more important than an interest in advancing or adding to the new style. The use of mass-manufactured building materials like steel, concrete, and glass were cheaper and saved money that could be used to construct additional buildings elsewhere.¹³ By using these new, more functional building styles and construction, the NPS was able to utilize local contractors, who could be found at a reasonable cost within the region.¹⁴

Although Pipestone was established in 1937 without an operating budget or full-time staff, throughout the years plans for development moved forward.¹⁵ Several smaller construction projects

⁹ JoAnn Wilkins and Donald L. Stevens, Jr., “Pipestone National Monument,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Washington D.C., 2003, Section 7: 1.

¹⁰ Allaback 3.

¹¹ Ibid., 4.

¹² Carr, 157.

¹³ Allaback, 13.

¹⁴ Carr, 91.

¹⁵ Hal K. Rothman and Daniel K. Holder, *Managing the Sacred and the Secular: An Administrative History of Pipestone National Monument*, (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service: 1992), 73-74.

preceded the Mission 66 initiative. As early as 1925, the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) erected a small brass plaque to commemorate the first Euro-American exploration of the area by the Fremont-Nicollet Expedition.¹⁶ Based in the City of Pipestone, Minnesota, the Indian Division of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC-ID) constructed footbridges, built dams, and cleared paths throughout the area during the Great Depression.¹⁷ In the early 1950s a new Circle Trail was developed by Pipestone residents and park officials. Also at this time, a new ranch-style house was built for use as a residence for the park superintendent and as an administration and visitor information contact station for the Monument.¹⁸

In the decade before Mission 66, Pipestone National Monument almost doubled in size, growing from 115 to 279 acres.¹⁹ Although the Three Maidens area was included in the Monument's enabling legislation in 1937, the land was not officially transferred from the City of Pipestone to the NPS until 1949. Four years later, the Monument acquired 250 acres from the Pipestone Indian School when the school graduated its last class and abandoned the premises.²⁰ The additional land made it possible for the Monument to accomplish some of the park's improvements both before and during the Mission 66 initiative.

As a result of several factors, Pipestone National Monument was the first small cultural park to receive funding for Mission 66 development, but largely because NPS Director Wirth had a personal connection with Minnesota and Pipestone was the only NPS unit in the state in 1957. The centennial anniversaries of both the State of Minnesota and the Pipestone Indian Reservation coincided in 1958.²¹ Pipestone National Monument received more than \$250,000 for the modern development of the park, which would include construction of a visitor center and another new residence for the additional full-time employees that the park was planning to hire.²² Development and plans for the Monument were outlined in the "Mission 66 Prospectus, Pipestone National Monument," which was prepared by park superintendent Paul L. Webb and Minnesota archeologist Paul L. Beaubien.²³

Once constructed, several important figures attended the dedication of the new facilities; including Minnesota Lieutenant Governor Karl F. Rölvaag, Minnesota Representative H. Carl Anderson, and NPS Regional Director Howard W. Baker. The ceremony was presided over by NPS Director Conrad Wirth.²⁴ All the Mission 66 development was completed in 1959, including an additional residence for park staff, the Quarry Line Trail (an extension of the Circle Trail), and a comfort station

¹⁶ "List of Classified Structures," Internal Assessments, National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, Omaha, Nebraska, Accessed 2 August 2010.

¹⁷ Kathleen Fitzgerald, "Cultural Landscapes Inventory: Pipestone National Monument," Internal draft, National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, Omaha, Nebraska, 2006, 44.

¹⁸ Kathleen Fitzgerald, "Pipestone National Monument, Ethnographic Landscape Report," U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2007, 102.

¹⁹ Fitzgerald, 91.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Wilkins and Stevens, Section 8: 8.

²² Rothman and Holder, 108-109.

²³ Paul L. Webb and Paul L. Beaubien, "Mission 66 Prospectus: Pipestone National Monument," U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1956, 8-9.

²⁴ Fitzgerald, 111.

near the Three Maidens, a spiritual site consisting of three large boulders of granite. The NPS labeled the project an instant success.²⁵ In the first year, visitation increased from 64,459 visitors in 1957 to 126,604 visitors in 1958, visitation remained above 100,000 for all but one year of the next three decades.²⁶

Sources:

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Wilkins, JoAnn and Donald L Stevens. "Pipestone National Monument." National Register of Historic Places Nomination. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Washington D.C. Listed 2003.

²⁵ Ibid., 98.

²⁶ Wilkins and Stevens, Section 8: 9.

Historian: Pipestone National Monument was recorded from 2009-10 by Katherine Kaliszewski, National Park Service Midwest Regional Office (MWRO) intern with supplemental material provided by Donald L. Stevens, Jr., Chief of History and National Register Programs MWRO. Photographs were taken by Daniel R. Pratt in July 2009. Interns Hilary Retseck and Kayla Hassett and MWRO historian Alesha Cerny completed the report narratives in 2012. The survey was reformatted and edited for transmittal in 2021 by Cerny. As a result of general management planning, the restroom is slated for demolition.

Project Information: This report was commissioned in order to comply with a stipulation in a programmatic agreement between the National Park Service and the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Officer regarding the demolition of Pipestone Mission 66 development buildings and structures. The Mission 66 restroom will be demolished as a result of general management planning for Pipestone National Monument.

The Mission 66 Visitor Center (HABS No. MN-167), Residence (HABS No. MN-168), and Entry Road (HAER No. MN-116), as well as the 1950 Residence (HABS No. MN-170) and the Residence Access Road (HAER No. MN-117) also will be demolished as part of the programmatic agreement that implements the preferred alternative of the general management plan. The buildings and structures interfere with the spiritual significance of the Pipestone quarries and associated natural/ethnographic elements of the National Monument. The ethnographic landscape will be restored to a more natural appearance. HABS, HAER, and HALS documentation will be completed on several buildings, structures, and landscapes in the park to mitigate the adverse impacts of this extensive landscape restoration project.

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Scale stick in photographs in 4 feet long.

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Daniel R. Pratt, photographer, July 2009

MN-169-1	View of Pipestone Mission 66 Restroom main (south) façade, looking north.
MN-169-2	Oblique view of Pipestone Mission 66 Restroom, looking northwest.