

PIPESTONE MISSION 66 ENTRY ROAD
Pipestone National Monument
36 Reservation Avenue
Pipestone
Pipestone County
Minnesota

HAER MN-116
HAER MN-116

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

PIPESTONE MISSION 66 ENTRY ROAD

HAER No. MN-116

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 715020, Northing 4876337 (NAD 83)

UTM: Zone 14, Easting 714499, Northing 4876403 (NAD 83)

UTM: Zone 14, Easting 714275, Northing 4876565 (NAD 83)

UTM: Zone 14, Easting 714322, Northing 4876734 (NAD 83)

Significance: The entry road was constructed from 1956-59 as part of the Mission 66 development. 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 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 architect, and reflected understated contemporary architecture in harmony with the park landscape.

Description: The Mission 66 development at Pipestone National Monument, Minnesota, completely altered visitor facilities as well as the physical orientation and access to park trails and resources in the heart of the Monument. Before Mission 66, the park’s only access road bisected the park. The park’s Mission 66 Master Plan Outline describes the CCC-ID-created access road: “After entering the Monument, the existing road running westward just inside the south boundary soon swings northward past the west side of the existing [1950] residence and after about 1,200’ swings again towards the west into a parking area. From the parking area there is a short pedestrian access to a temporary museum [created in the early 1950s out of a CCC-ID picnic structure] and toilet, and about 500 feet of trail to the quarry exhibit.”¹

The “Mission 66 for Pipestone National Monument” reports “Still in its same place and condition is the low-standard Monument road which should be relocated better to serve key features, and improved to the extent warranted by the amount of use.”² According to the “Mission 66 Prospectus:” “The entrance road will extend from the northern city limits of Pipestone through the meadows of the Monument terminating in a fifty-car capacity parking area at the Visitor Center. The relocation of this access road will give visitors a good introduction to the setting of the Monument area by providing sweeping views of many important features.”³

¹“Master Plan Development Outline: Pipestone National Monument, Minnesota,” National Park Service, March 1957, “P” Personnel-Master Plan Development Outline, Pipestone National Monument, Pipestone, MN.

² “Mission 66 for Pipestone National Monument,” U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, General Box E, File E1491, Pipestone National Monument, 2.

³ “Mission 66 Prospectus: Pipestone National Monument,” National Park Service, June 6, 1956, General Files 1952-1960, Box A-34, File A98, National Archives Records Administration-Central Plains.

The “Mission 66 for Pipestone National Monument” outlines improvements on the existing access road: “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.”⁴

The List of Classified Structures entry for the entrance road notes that the special character of the road corridor is formed by the level road, arching back on itself as it approaches the Visitor Center, visually reinforced by the Sioux quartzite ledge in the background.

The Mission 66 National Register of Historic Places nomination form describes the entry road as follows:

“Originating at the southeast corner of the Monument, the two lane entrance road stretched west downhill on the south side of the park and, near the bottom of the small glacial impression where the quarries lay, loops to the north and northeast. The Mission 66 access road contrasts with the previous access along rectilinear roads by establishing a large curved approach to the visitor center.”⁵ The road corridor, as it navigates around the Sioux quartzite ledge, allows drivers to experience an arrival sequence of distant views to gently undulating hills of the northern prairie, farmlands and riparian vegetation, the Sioux quartzite escarpment, and finally “focuses the visitor on their destination, the visitor center.”⁶

The loop road ends with a parking lot west of the Visitor Center. The original Master Plan depicted the parking lot only on the north side of the loop so that drivers were presented with the Visitor Center entrance and quarries before reaching the parking lot. The parking area was also “adjusted to incorporate the parking area as an integral part of the road plan. This was in order to eliminate unnecessary grading for a relocation of the natural drainage channel, which [existed] in a westerly direction from the proposed parking area. This topographic condition also required us to shift the location for the visitor center slightly to the south.” Eventually, the plan was modified to include parking on both sides of the loop. In spite of the change, the traffic flow remained consistent.⁷

This asphalt paved road has two approximately 12’ wide lanes and no shoulder. The asphalt stone mix is Sioux quartzite, providing a pinkish rose hue comparable to the escarpment. At the end of the road loop, narrow shoulders constructed of concrete surround the parking area and inner parking island.⁸

⁴ “Mission 66 for Pipestone National Monument,” 3.

⁵ 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.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ “List of Classified Structures,” Internal assessments, National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, Omaha, Nebraska, Accessed 2 August 2010.

⁸ Ibid.

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 National Park Service (NPS). It would not be until the 1950s before any true park development occurred.

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 1948.⁹ By 1950, 99 percent of visitors arrived in national parks by automobile.¹⁰

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.¹¹ 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.¹² 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

⁹ Sarah Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers: The History of a Building Type* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2000), 1.

¹⁰ Ethan Carr, *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2007), 5.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹² *Ibid.*, 6-7.

values that visitors were meant to experience.¹³ In response to this criticism, Director Conrad L. Wirth crafted a program that would increase Congressional funding to the parks.¹⁴

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 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 1951.¹⁵

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.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷

Although Pipestone was established in 1937 without an operating budget or full-time staff, throughout the years plans for development moved forward.¹⁸ Several smaller construction projects 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.¹⁹ 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.²⁰ 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.²¹

¹³ Ibid., 55.

¹⁴ Ibid., 57.

¹⁵ Wilkins and Stevens, Section 7: 1.

¹⁶ Allaback 3.

¹⁷ Ibid., 4.

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ "List of Classified Structures."

²⁰ Kathleen Fitzgerald, "Cultural Landscapes Inventory: Pipestone National Monument," Internal draft, National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, Omaha, Nebraska, 2006, 44.

²¹ Kathleen Fitzgerald, "Pipestone National Monument, Ethnographic Landscape Report," U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2007, 102.

In the decade before Mission 66, Pipestone National Monument almost doubled in size, growing from 115 to 279 acres.²² 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.²³ 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 1958.²⁴ 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.²⁵ 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.²⁶

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.²⁷ 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 near the Three Maidens, a spiritual site consisting of three large boulders of granite. The NPS labeled the project an instant success.²⁸ 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.²⁹

Sources:

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Carr, Ethan. *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007.

²² Fitzgerald, 91.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Wilkins and Stevens, Section 8: 8.

²⁵ Rothman and Holder, 108-109.

²⁶ 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.

²⁷ Fitzgerald, 111.

²⁸ Ibid., 98.

²⁹ Wilkins and Stevens, Section 8: 9.

Corbett, William P. "A History of the Red Pipestone Quarry and Pipestone National Monument." M.A. Thesis. University of South Dakota, July 1976.

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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 entry road will be partially removed.

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 Entry Road, a contributing structure in the park historic district, will be partially demolished as a result of general management planning for Pipestone National Monument. The general management plan (GMP) provides for using the current entrance road but ending the road where it bends toward the existing parking lot. The NPS plans to remove the remainder of the road leading to and ending at the parking lot.

The Mission 66 Residence (HABS No. MN-168), Restroom (HABS No. MN-169), and Pipestone Visitor Center (HABS No. MN-167), as well as the 1950 Residence (HABS No. MN-170) and the Residence Access Road (HAER No. MN-117) will also be demolished as part of the programmatic agreement that implements the preferred alternative of the GMP. 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-116-1	View of Pipestone National Monument sign at east entrance of Pipestone Mission 66 Entry Road, looking west.
MN-116-2	View of Pipestone Mission 66 Entry Road, looking west.

PIPESTONE NATIONAL MONUMENT

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



PIPESTONE

NATIONAL MONUMENT

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