

CIRCLE TRAIL
Pipestone National Monument
36 Reservation Avenue
Pipestone
Pipestone County
Minnesota

HALS MN-3
HALS MN-3

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

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

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

CIRCLE TRAIL

HALS No. MN-3

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

USGS Pipestone North Quadrangle – Minnesota 7.5 Minute Series, 2010

Significance: Originally developed by the Civilian Conservation Corp-Indian Division (CCC-ID), the trail, constructed 1949-50, 1956, was expanded by Interpreter George Bryan and later redesigned 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 (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 architect, and reflected understated contemporary architecture in harmony with the park landscape.

Description: The ¾ mile long Circle Trail was redesigned as part of the Mission 66 program at the Monument. The trail begins and ends at the Visitor Center, with traffic generally moving in a clockwise pattern to the north and east of the Visitor Center. According to the National Register of Historic Places nomination, the interpretive trail “crossed Pipestone Creek just north of the visitor center and hooked up with the existing [Civilian Conservation Corps-Indian Division] trail as it followed the north edge of the tree lined creek and open prairie to Winnewissa Falls. Near the falls, the north fork in the trail leads to the top of the quartzite ledge to the Nicollet marker and the south fork continues along the base of the ledge and crosses the creek just below the falls. South of the Oracle, an interpretive feature of the trail, a second Mission 66 redesigned section of the trail extends west to the south quarries, a remodeled quarry exhibit and returns to the visitor center.”¹

The 3' wide trail is paved with asphalt covered in crushed Sioux quartzite similar to the Entry Road. Along the trail, short sections are lined with Sioux quartzite rock borders; the rest of the trail has no border. The Circle Trail includes 16 stakes which correspond with interpretive text within the self-guided tour booklet. These stakes identify geological features, native plant life, and notable stone formations including Old Stone Face (Stake No. 5), Leaping Rock (Stake No. 8), and the Oracle (Stake No. 11).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. On August 26, 1937,

¹ 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.

² Kathleen Fitzgerald, “Cultural Landscapes Inventory: Pipestone National Monument,” National Park Service, 2007; Pipestone Indian Shrine Association, “Circle Trail,” 1959, 1985, National Park Service, Pipestone National Monument.

Pipestone National Monument was established, officially opening the site to the public. As a small, cultural park, and the first National Park Service site in Minnesota, Pipestone National Monument experienced a level of isolation sometimes associated with early NPS sites and took years to build a meager administrative infrastructure, retaining its pre-National Monument designation appearance until the late 1940s. While the Pipestone Reservation's members of the Civilian Conservation Corps-Indian Division (CCC-ID) cleared underbrush, managed Pipestone Creek and Lake Hiawatha with the creation of a dam, and created a campground and trails, the last projects ended shortly after the national monument was created.

The end of World War II brought an onslaught of visitors to the National Parks, with families using their automobile to visit America's cultural treasures and natural beauty. Pipestone, with a pre-war visitation around 2,000 individuals per season, counted more than 5,000 visitors in 1946. This influx of interest in the National Parks taxed many site's resources and Pipestone was no exception. When U.S. Representative H. Carl Andersen reported that the park's current state was a local embarrassment and park oversight should be transferred to local interests, NPS responded to local criticisms by gradually implementing the park's long-term plan, created in the 1940s. The first permanent park equipment, a used pick-up truck, was purchased in 1947 and the first year-round employee, Lyle Linch, hired in early 1948.³

Linch, a ten-year veteran of the Park Service, immediately recognized Pipestone National Monument's shortcomings and began improving the site's interpretive offerings and amenities. In 1949 Linch hired the park's first seasonal interpreter, an Ojibway pipe carver named George Bryan. Linch and Bryan, working alongside local park advocate Winifred Bartlett, started construction on a main nature trail that would pass by many of Pipestone's notable geological and landscaping features. The Circle Trail opened to the public the summer of 1950. The trail helped orientate the increasing number of visitors to the park and guided park visitors to Pipestone's highlights, helping to relieve some of the park's congestion and giving structure to visits.⁴

As part of Pipestone National Monument's expansive Mission 66 developments, the Circle Trail was altered to incorporate the new Visitor Center. The park's Mission 66 Prospectus makes clear "Use of the present trail by a self-guiding booklet will be continued. The trail will begin and end at the Visitor Center and will lead the visitor to the principal points of interest, which include, besides the quarry area, the wooded Lake Hiawatha and Winnewissa Falls areas with botanical and geological displays, Leaping Rock, the Fremont and Nicollet inscriptions, the stone faces, and the red quartz wall which parallels the quarry line."⁵ The Circle Trail has continued to follow the same Mission 66-adjusted path since 1959. Self-guiding tour booklets, originally created by the Pipestone Indian Shrine Association in the 1950s and last updated in 2005, are available at the Visitor Center.

³ Hal K. Rothman and Daniel J. Holder, *Managing the Sacred and the Secular: An Administrative History of Pipestone National Monument*, U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, 1992, 84.

⁴ Kathleen Fitzgerald, "Cultural Landscapes Inventory: Pipestone National Monument." Internal draft, National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, Omaha, Nebraska, 2006, 40.

⁵ "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.

Mission 66 is the largest program for park improvements and expansion ever initiated by the Park Service and is one of the most significant federally-sponsored post-World War II national building projects. The Mission 66 development at Pipestone National Monument, Minnesota, completely altered visitor facilities as well as the physical orientation and access to the park trails and resources in the heart of the monument. It featured construction of the visitor center/park headquarters and maintenance facilities, a new entrance loop road originating from the southeast corner of the park, an adjoining parking lot, trails, and housing.

Sources:

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

"Final General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement, Pipestone National Monument." National Park Service, 2007.

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

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"List of Classified Structures." Internal Assessments. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, Omaha, Nebraska. Accessed 5 July 2012.

Pipestone Indian Shrine Association. "Circle Trail." National Park Service. 1959, rev.1985. Pipestone National Monument.

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

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

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.

Historian: Pipestone National Monument was recorded from 2009-10 by Katherine Kaliszewski, NPS 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.

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 treatment of historic structures at Pipestone National Monument. The Circle Trail, a contributing trail in the park historic district, will be retained and preserved as a result of general management planning for Pipestone National Monument.

The CCC Dam (HAER No. MN-118) and Footbridges (HAER No. MN-119), the Nicollet-Fremont Marker (HABS No. MN-171), the South Quarry Line Trail (HALS No. MN-4), and the Sioux Quartzite Steps (HALS No. MN-5) also will be retained and preserved as part of the programmatic agreement that implements the preferred alternative of the general management plan. However, the Mission 66 Pipestone Visitor Center (HABS No. MN-167), Residence (HABS No. MN-168), Restroom (HABS No. MN-169), 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) will be demolished. 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-3-1	View of Circle Trail along west face of Sioux quartzite escarpment, looking north.
MN-3-2	View of Circle Trail along west face of Sioux quartzite escarpment, looking south.
MN-3-3	View of Circle Trail immediately east of Winnewissa Falls, looking southeast.
MN-3-4	View of Circle Trail at Winnewissa Falls, showing masonry retaining walls, looking northeast.