

SIOUX QUARTZITE STEPS
Pipestone National Monument
36 Reservation Avenue
Pipestone
Pipestone County
Minnesota

HALS MN-5
HALS MN-5

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

SIoux QUARTZITE STEPS

HALS No. MN-5

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 714758, Northing 4877070 (NAD 83)

UTM: Zone 14, Easting 714759, Northing 4876971 (NAD 83)

UTM: Zone 14, Easting 714707, Northing 4877098 (NAD 83)

Significance: The Sioux quartzite steps were part of the initial development at Pipestone by the Civilian Conservation Corps-Indian Division (CCC-ID) constructed 1934-37, 1956-57. This series of steps allows access up and down the Sioux quartzite escarpment along the Circle Trail. The Circle Trail was expanded 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: In the List of Classified Structures inventory, Kathleen Fitzgerald describes the Sioux quartzite steps as a series of stairs of varying treads and rises along the Circle Trail that provide access up and down the Sioux quartzite escarpment. At the fork in the Circle Trail, north of Winnewissa Falls, Sioux quartzite steps lead up the escarpment to the Nicollet marker. The steps vary in width but are generally around 3' wide. The tread on each step is approximately 3' deep with a low 3" to 5" rise. The lower portion of the steps is composed of numerous slabs of quartzite mortared in place with concrete. The style of the steps changes halfway up the ledge to a more natural appearance. Large chunks or slabs of quartzite are dry stacked, forming irregular steps on top of existing rock or cuts into the quartzite ledge.

The second set of steps descends the escarpment immediately adjacent to the falls. The steps are cut out of the escarpment, forming a spiral stairway. The tread is paved with asphalt that contains Sioux quartzite aggregate. The rises are approximately the same and overall, the steps are triangular in shape. Near the mid-point of the steps is a small landing from which the falls and Pipestone Creek can be viewed. The landing is composed of smaller pieces of quartzite in irregular shapes secured with concrete. The lower portion of the steps is also paved in asphalt with Sioux quartzite aggregate, but the steps are square or rectangular rather than triangular.

The third set of steps is located south of the rock formation the Oracle. This set of steps is composed of larger slabs of Sioux quartzite mortared together with cement and paved with asphalt that contains Sioux quartzite aggregate.¹

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, 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.²

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 1946.³ 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 1948.⁴ Linch, a ten-year veteran of the Park Service, immediately recognized Pipestone National Monument's shortcomings and began improving the site's amenities.

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.

¹ Kathleen Fitzgerald, "Cultural Landscapes Inventory: Pipestone National Monument," National Park Service, 2007.

² Kathleen Fitzgerald, "Pipestone National Monument: Ethnographic Landscape Report." U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2007. 57-62.

³ William P. Corbett, "A History of the Red Pipestone Quarry and Pipestone National Monument," (M.A. Thesis. University of South Dakota, July 1976), 90.

⁴ 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.

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.

_____. "Pipestone National Monument: Ethnographic Landscape Report." U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2007.

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

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 Sioux Quartzite steps contribute to the park historic district and 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 Circle Trail (HALS No. MN-3), the South Quarry Line Trail (HALS No. MN-4), and the Nicollet-Fremont Marker (HABS No. MN-171) 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. These 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.

INDEX TO BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS

Daniel R. Pratt, photographer, July 2009

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| MN-5-1 | View of Sioux Quartzite Steps to Oracle viewing site, looking east.
Circle Trail (HALS No. MN-3) visible at base of steps. |
| MN-5-2 | View of Sioux Quartzite Steps to head of Winnewissa Falls, looking
southeast. |
| MN-5-3 | View of Sioux Quartzite Steps leading to Nicollet-Fremont Marker
(HABS No. MN-171), looking northeast. |