
MHS COLLECTIONS



DEEP IN THE BOWELS of the Minnesota Historical Society's main building in St. Paul is the museum storage area. There, amid inaugural gowns of Minnesota governors' wives, World War I posters, an early gasoline pump, nineteenth-century surgical equipment, and many other items, is the society's collection of Indian artifacts. This considerable assemblage includes Indian clothing, domestic objects, tools, musical instruments — and five large storage drawers containing carved catlinite, or pipestone, articles from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The bulk of the catlinite collection consists of 116 pipe bowls and a number of pipe stems, plus other Indian culture artifacts and tourist items.

Catlinite, a mottled-with-white, metamorphosed reddish shale, was named after artist George Catlin who in 1836 visited the quarry near Pipestone, Minnesota, that was the chief source of the stone for Indians of many tribes through the centuries. Catlinite is still taken from the quarry, now part of Pipestone National Monument. (Small amounts are found in Wisconsin, Ohio, and other places.) An amateur ethnologist as well as artist, Catlin recorded legends related to him by the Sioux (Dakota) Indians of the area.

One of the many legends about the red stone told how the Great Spirit called his people together there and, "standing on the precipice of the red pipe stone rock, broke from its wall a piece, and made a huge pipe by turning it in his hand." As he smoked the pipe, he told his people that this red stone "was their flesh — that they must use it for their pipes of peace — that it belonged to them all, and that the war-club and scalping knife must not be raised on its ground."

Whether peace reigned all the time at the quarry is not known, but pipestone for the making of pipes was

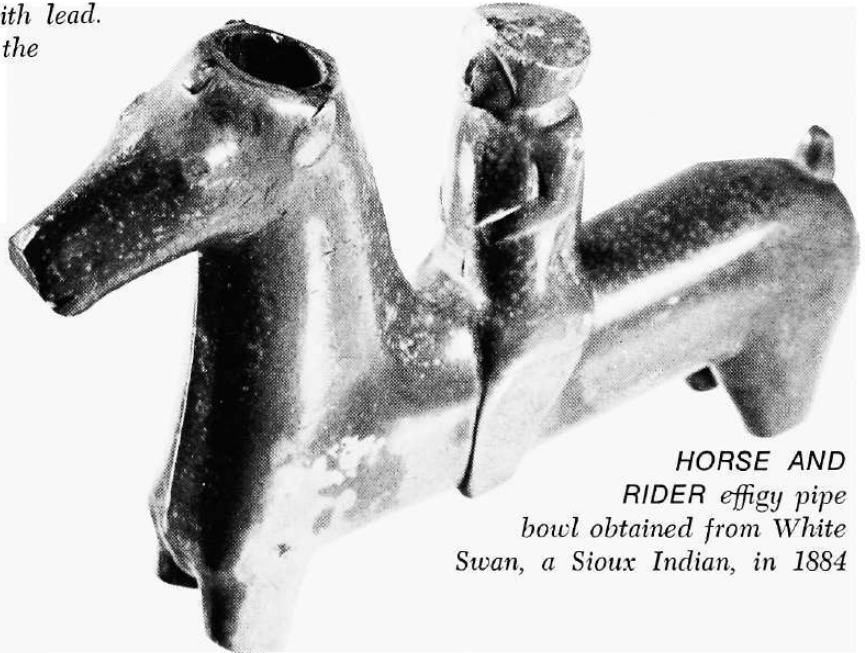
UNUSUAL pipe bowl carved in effigy of a white man



INDIANS frequently inlaid pipes with lead. Lead was usually obtained from the white man, although several tribes in Wisconsin and Iowa mined and smelted lead as early as the 1780s.



INCISED disk found at Taylors Falls, c. 1900



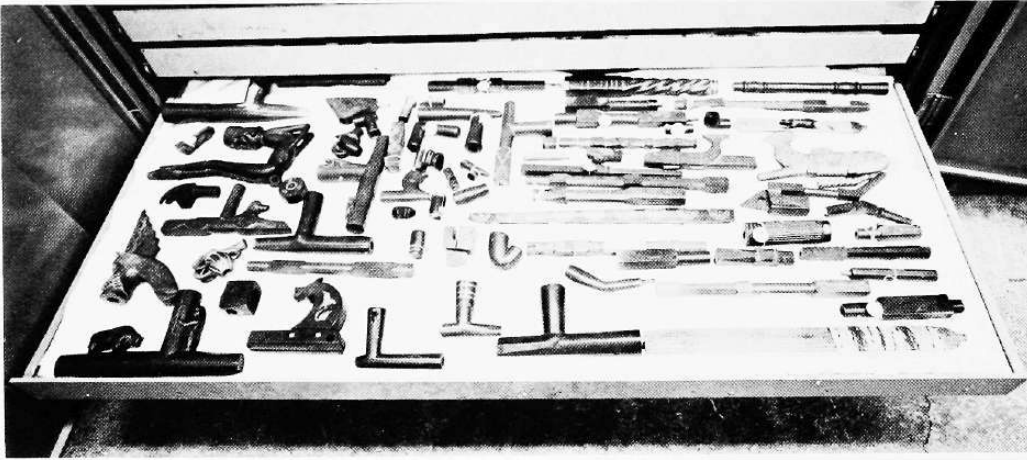
HORSE AND RIDER effigy pipe bowl obtained from White Swan, a Sioux Indian, in 1884



CARVED dragon's head effigy pipe with incised floral designs

1877 WEDDING CERTIFICATE carved in catlinite





IN this storage drawer are pipes that once belonged to (foreground row, from far right) Chief Little Crow, Chief Hole-in-the-Day, and one of the Faribault family.

highly sought after by Indian tribes as a trade item. Smoking was a widespread custom among American natives, and both Plains and Woodland Indians associated it with their important religious ceremonies. Catlinite pipes and other objects dating back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have been found in Indian graves as distant as New York, Georgia, and Washington. By the nineteenth century Indians had learned to melt metal, and they began ornamenting their pipes with lead inlays. In later and rougher times, they produced tourist items such as tomahawks and paper knives from the material which ranges from red-brown to pink in color.

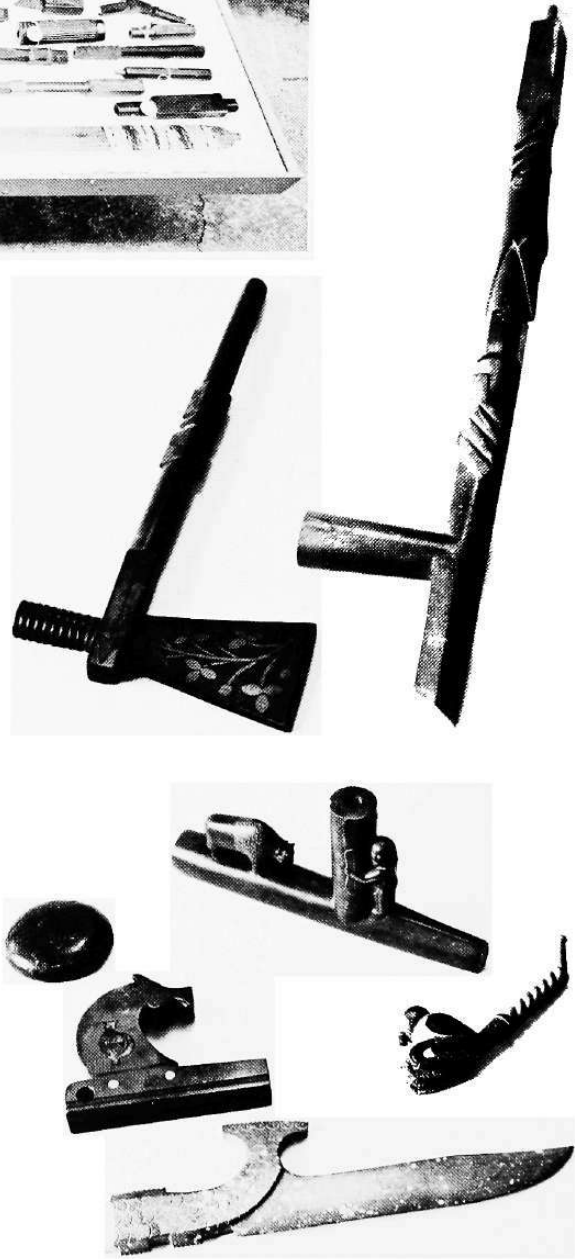
Although many of the pipes in the society's collection are plain-surfaced, right-angle, or elbow pipes (and probably for everyday usage), several score are of distinctive design. Pipestone is soft and easily worked with a file or drill, and many of the society's ceremonial pipes, or calumets, are beautifully carved.

Pipe stems form an interesting segment of the society's catlinite collection, although stems were more commonly made of wood. Those in the collection range in length from 4 inches to 22 inches, the majority being about a foot long. The stem of the calumet was more sacred to the Sioux than the bowl, and many are carved in unusual designs.

Other catlinite carvings for Indian use in the collection include bowls, human effigy figures, beads, a carved cross (an unusual image of cultural assimilation), and a war club.

Collection of pipes, stems, and other artifacts by the society assures the continued preservation and appreciation of these expressions of native American art and religion.

MARILYN ZIEBARTH



TWO PIPES (top) with their stems — one shaped like a tomahawk and probably a tourist item, the other a two-foot-long calumet with carved snake and hands. The fish-shaped knife (bottom) in the foreground is a tourist item of light-colored, heavily mottled catlinite. At right is a pipe and stem in the form of an owl resting on an eagle claw. The photographs on these pages are by Eugene D. Becker.



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