

VESTAL, OPHELIA D. THE PEACE PIPE. 10370

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LEGEND & STORY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

415

Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

VESTAL, OPHELIA D. THE PEACE PIPE

#10370

Field worker's name Opheia D. VestalThis report made on (date) March 24 193

1. This legend was
secured from (name) Chamber of Commerce

Address Lawton, OklahomaThis person is (male or female) White, Negro, Indian,

If Indian, give tribe _____

2. Origin and history of ~~Legend or story~~ Indian Legend "The Peace Pipe"

3. Write out the legend or story as completely as possible. Use blank sheets and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 6

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Ophelia D. Vestal
Investigator
March 24, 1938.

THE PEACE PIPE.

In every Indian tribe, the white flag is an emblem of truce when displayed in battle, and the red pipe is the emblem of peace. Whenever members of various bands assemble the pipe of peace is passed around the circle of squatting chiefs and when all have participated in the vile fumes, the council is ready to talk the real business of the moment.

Connected with the peace pipe is an ancient tradition, which seems, more or less, to have a common origin with the majority of the Indian tribes. Nearly all Indian customs, dances and practices are based on religion. Even the war dance is a religious ceremony in which the guidance of their Divinity is solicited and the scalp dance is a dance of thanks that those participating have been delivered from harm and that they have prevailed over their enemies.

For in the northwest country, west of the Falls of St. Anthony, a distance of some three hundred miles, and on the summit of a dividing ridge between the Missouri and St. Peters Rivers, is located the "Cateau des Prairies", as it is termed by the French, and near its southern extremity is "Pipe Stone Quarry".

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Here according to Indian tradition, happened the mystic birth of the red peace pipe which has blown its smoke over red men of all nations. There, too, was born the peace breathing calumet, which was fringed with the eagle's quills, shedding its thrilling aroma over all the land and soothing the fury of the relentless savage.

Various versions of Pipe Stone quarry are held by the several tribes. One is that the Great Spirit here assembled all his peoples, of every tribe, and standing on the precipice, broke from its wall a piece which he moulded into a pipe bowl and from which he smoked over them in all directions. He told his people that this rock was of their flesh and that it should be used only for making peace pipes; that it belonged to all of them and that the war spear, the scalp knife and the tomahawk must never be raised within its sight but that all the nations of the Indian world should be permitted to assemble there in peace. At the last whiff of his pipe his head went into a great cloud and the whole surface of the rock for several miles was melted and glazed. Two great caverns were opened beneath and two women (who have since become guardians of the place) entered the blazing furnace and they are heard until this day and answer

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the medicine men who consult them when they visit the holy place. Tradition gives to these two women the names of Tso-me-cos-to-won-dae and Tso-mee-cos-tee.

High up on a mound, near this place, is "Thunder's Nest", where a very small bird is reputed to sit upon her eggs during fair weather and the skies are rent with bolts of thunder upon approach of a storm which denotes the hatching of her eggs. The bird is holy and has been seen by the medicine men and described as no larger than the small finger. Her mate is a serpent whose fiery tongue destroys the young of the bird.

Pipe Stone quarry is about thirty feet in height and extends about two miles and at its base are five large boulders and nearby is a "jumping stone", which was used by the holy pilgrims for exploits of daring.

Another legend in this locality from Indian tribes tells of a great freshet, which took place many centuries ago and destroyed all the people of the earth and all the red men here assembled to find safety from the waters. The water continued to rise and finally covered them all and their flesh was con-

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verted into red pipe stone. But while all were drowning a virgin clutched the foot of a very large bird which was flying overhead and was carried to the top of a very high cliff where she was saved from the deluge and where she became the mother of twins, their father being the war-eagle and her children have since peopled the earth.

The Sioux Indians, who in later years, through their greater number, and because Pipe Stone quarry was located in their hunting grounds barred other Indians from securing stone for pipes, have an interesting account. In the beginning, according to their version, before the creation of any man the Great Spirit, who was a great hunter, would slay the buffalo and bring their bodies to Cateau des Prairies; and their blood, running on the rocks, turned them red. One day a large snake crawled into the nest of the holy bird and attempted to eat her eggs and one of the eggs hatched out in a burst of thunder. The Great Spirit annoyed by the intrusion of the snake broke a piece of red stone and hurled it at the snake. This stone on striking the ground was turned into the image of a man. But the man's feet had grown fast into the ground and in this deplorable condition he stood for ages. He

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was older than the combined ages of any hundred living men. In course of time another human form grew beside him and a vile snake, gnawed off their lower legs, thus releasing them from their sad plight in the rocks. From these have sprung the people which now inhabit the earth.

Traditions vary among Indian tribes and another version of the Sioux is that many ages after man was made all the Indian tribes were engaged in a battle. The Great Spirit sent runners for various leaders and called them all together at Red Pipe. He stood on top of Red Rock and his people were assembled on the plains below. Breaking a piece of the rock he told them that it was a piece of their flesh and that from it they must make peace pipes and calumets and that they must smoke to him when they desired his good will. The smoke from his big pipe rolled over them all and at the last whiff from his pipe a mighty blaze sprang up and rolling over the rocks, melted their surface. At that moment two squaws went in a blaze under the rock, where they still remain and must be consulted by the medicine men.

In olden days the tribes travelled to these rocks and there left their totems or signs. Some young braves didn't

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return having lost their lives on the "jumping rock". This medicine rock is a part of the precipice which has been severed from the main part, stands about seven or eight feet away and of equal height but only about seven feet in diameter. It stands like a high column about thirty-five feet high, rounded and highly polished. It requires a daring effort to jump from the main precipice to this rock and be able to return in safety but many braves tried it with success and left an arrow to speak their prowess. Every young man in the nation sought to accomplish this feat, and after it had been successfully performed was permitted to boast of it for the remaining days of his life.

And this is how according to Indian tradition, was created a peace pipe.