




Calumet Hotel, about 1940 (MHS COLLECTIONS)

Calumet Hotel Pipestone

 UNLIKE MUCH of the rest of the state, the southwestern corner of Minnesota is not blessed with an abundance of lakes, sizable rivers, or dense forests. Nevertheless, Mother Nature smiled on the area when she gifted it with copious deposits of Sioux quartzite, a building stone so aesthetically appealing that it shames most other construction materials. Indeed, Split Rock Bridge, a small stone arch of pink Sioux quartzite located south of Pipestone, is one of Minnesota's most attractive bridges. Yet it is but a modest example of what can be achieved. A stroll through downtown Pipestone reveals a city almost entirely garnished in the attractive pink-and-red stone. This striking downtown is anchored by the Calumet Hotel.

Named for the ceremonial pipes carved by Indian people, the original Calumet was a three-story, wood-

framed building veneered in brick. It was constructed in 1883 to serve the many train travelers passing through Pipestone or arriving in the area to settle. The hotel was lost to fire in 1886 but rebuilt on the same site in 1888. The new Calumet was dressed in the pink-and-red masonry that ultimately became the city's hallmark. It featured a large, arched main entrance and a crenellated parapet. Its architectural style can best be described as Romanesque inspired.

Business at the Calumet fell off significantly about the middle of the twentieth century as automobiles became more popular and train travel declined. This trend hurt many small-town hotels, as roadside motor courts became the primary lodgings for those journeying the wide-open spaces of a country now accessible to almost all.

For a time, it appeared that the

deteriorating Calumet would not survive the twentieth century, but by the early 1980s the building had been restored to its former self and honored with a National Register of Historic Places listing. Today, it continues to punctuate a principal corner in downtown Pipestone, beckoning visitors to come inside and contribute to the story that is the Calumet.

—*Denis P. Gardner*

Sources: David Albersman and Charles W. Nelson, "Calumet Hotel," September 1975, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota Historical Society; Judy Zerby, "Historic Hideaways," *Minneapolis Tribune*, June 7, 1981.

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