

WHERE **SCIENCE****HISTORY****AND****ART** CONNECT

To: Raven Hill friends
From: Cheri
Date: April 27, 2024
Re: Stone Tools & Artifacts

Stones, treasured by Indigenous and ancient peoples, served as indispensable tools in daily life. Stones were used to slice, grind, pound and scrape or they were made into lethal projectiles, such as slingstones, arrowheads and spears honed for the chase. Crafting axes, knives, scrapers, and hammer stones from distinct types of stone, early humans tailored stone tools to suit specific tasks and resources. These stone tool artifacts were used to cut, scrape, and shape hides, wood, bone and other stone; fashion sturdy abodes, grind grains & seeds into nourishment; and shape metals & other materials. Stone tools were instrumental in advancing early human technological ingenuity.



This flute slide is made from stone, easily shaped and carved to create the sliding mechanism used for adjusting the pitch of the flute. –Raven Hill Collection



Only about an inch long, this tiny bird effigy is made of obsidian or volcanic glass. –Raven Hill Collection

In the shadows of a daily life that was dependent on stone, stone tools were used to create artifacts, like amulets, figurines and talismans—connections to the divine—guiding religious ceremonies, burial rites, and cultural customs. Indigenous cultures ignite our imagination with their array of stone creations, each with its own spiritual essence, cultural resonance, and artistic passion. Soapstone pipes served as sacred conduits for smoking tobacco and other sacred substances. Stones were carved into treasures like effigy figurines, miniature marvels sculpted to embody animals, deities or revered ancestors. These effigies graced solemn ceremonies or were tendered as offerings to the gods. Stone amulets and talismans, known as Telman, glistened with protective and spiritual energies, their

carved symbols invoking ancient powers and beliefs. Ceremonial stone blades were wielded in solemn rituals and sacred ceremonies. Altars hewn from solid stone served as places for offerings, prayers and worship. And high up on the cliffs, stones whispered ancient tales, their surfaces etched with symbolic pictographs, communicating stories over the generations. In this early world, every stone tool & artifact took on its own vital role—each stone helping to define human societies and each essential for survival, resource management, craftsmanship and cultural heritage.



*Two ceremonial spear heads are part of the "Stone Tools & Artifacts" display in the coming exhibition **Under Michigan & Beyond.** –Raven Hill Collection*



A gorget is a pendant worn around the neck. Stone artifacts like this gorget were used by Indigenous peoples of the Americas as a symbol of prestige, identity, or religious significance. –Raven Hill Collection



A soapstone pipe like this artifact would have been used in religious ceremonies. –Raven Hill Collection



Hammer stones were often attached to a handle with deer sinew, making a stone tool that was very effective and easy to use. –Raven Hill Collection

Throughout time, stone has stood as the foundation of human creativity, architectural marvels and cultural achievements. A medium for personal expression and enduring craftsmanship, stone has etched its mark across eras, leaving a legacy of resilience and timeless beauty. From the towering monuments of ancient civilizations to the cobblestone streets of early population centers, stone has remained indispensable, shaping landscapes and civilizations over time. As building blocks for construction, the usefulness of stone knows no bounds. Yet, beyond its structural uses, stone also merged itself into the daily life of our ancestors, offering practical solutions to their problems. Slate, with its smooth surface, became slate boards for writing lessons in the old one-room schools. Before modern heating systems, soapstone bed warmers were set by the hearth to absorb heat and offered warm beds on cold nights. In kitchens, soapstone pressure cookers were a feat of culinary ingenuity, while flat stones worked for grilling succulent meats and crisp vegetables. Even today, stone endures in the kitchen, its steadfast surfaces perfect for grilling or baking. Mortar & pestles and metate grindstones, shaped from stone, continue to grind grains and spices in cultures where tradition reigns supreme. In every facet of life, stone's versatility has known no bounds, continually endearing itself to humans with unwavering grace. Even today, many of us can't resist collecting stones when we go for a walk!

"Stone Tools & Artifacts" is just one of many displays to be featured as part of Raven Hill Discovery Center's coming exhibit ***Under Michigan & Beyond***, a captivating and interactive exploration of Michigan and Earth's geological wonders, how resources are excavated from the earth and the role they play in our daily lives. Mark your calendars and join us at Raven Hill from noon to 4pm on May 25, 2024, for the opening of ***Under Michigan & Beyond***. This ever-evolving exhibition will remain open through the end of 2025, so plan to visit often and see the changes taking place! Meanwhile, if you are a hunter of rocks & fossils, make plans to bring your favorite rock to show & tell or to leave at Raven Hill for everyone to enjoy.



See how many slate boards you can find at Raven Hill. Check out the Treehouse, Schoolhouse and Connections Trail. Try your hand at writing on a slate board with a slate pencil, when you visit the Center's coming exhibit ***Under Michigan and Beyond***. –Raven Hill Collection



Today we would plug in our electric blanket on a wintry night. In "the old days," a soapstone bed warmer kept your feet just as toasty warm. –Raven Hill Collection



A soapstone pressure cooker has a stone stopper in the top that releases steam during the cooking process. –Raven Hill Collection



Stone metates are still used today. You can try grinding corn next time you visit! –Raven Hill Collection

Cheri