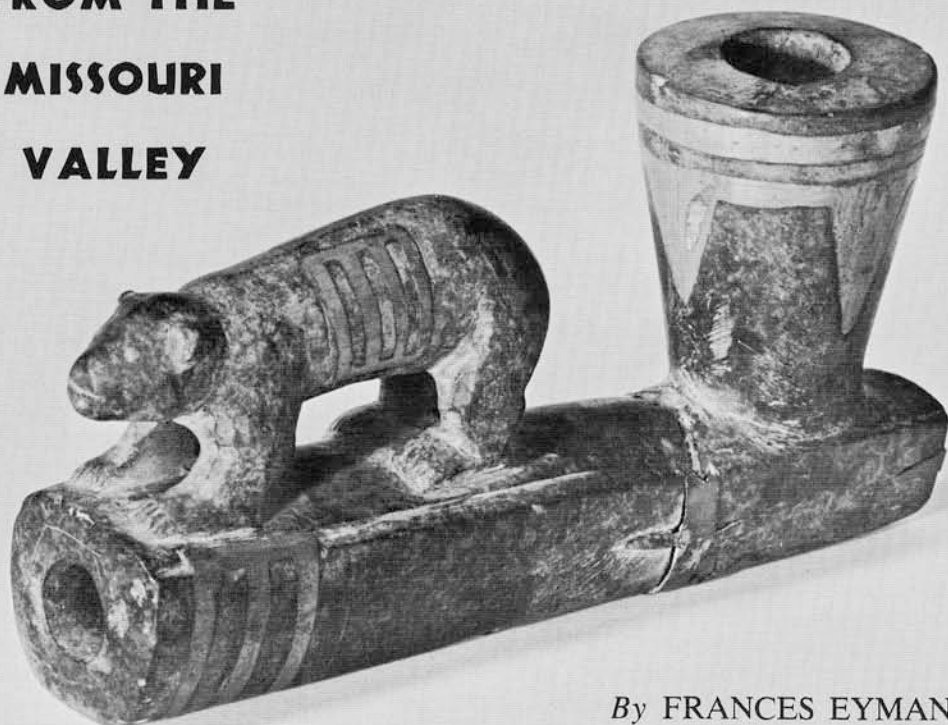


A GRIZZLY BEAR CARVING

**FROM THE
MISSOURI
VALLEY**



By FRANCES EYMAN

Some of the most compelling art objects made by the North American Indian are small, and their effect is due to their perfection of line rather than their monumental qualities. The Indian artist was at his best when he dealt with his animal neighbors, creatures whom he knew and loved so well that he could catch the essence of an animal in a manner more suggestive than realistic. Our collections include a carved pipe bowl from the lower Missouri Valley which especially appeals to me because of its quality, its historical associations, and its relationship to the formidable animal most respected by the Plains Indians.

The pipe bowl was collected by George Catlin in the early 1830's. We have no hints as to its history until 1901, when it was given to the University Museum by John Wanamaker as one of a group of seven Plains pipe bowls collected by Catlin. Six of the seven had been illustrated by Catlin in 1848. His published drawings are somewhat crude, and do not represent

any single specimen exactly enough to permit its absolute identification. However, the correspondence of our six specimens with all six examples published by Catlin makes the identification secure. Like a few other published Catlin items in our collections, we believe that the pipe bowls did not remain with Catlin's Indian Gallery and collection, but that he somehow relinquished ownership to them when he sent them to a publisher for illustration, and that they had a mysterious later history separate from the fate of his gallery and collection. Unfortunately, we have no hint as to where Mr. Wanamaker may have purchased them.

In this connection, those of us who have worked closely with the American Indian specimens in the University Museum have learned to associate John Wanamaker with some of the finest art objects in our collections. In the early part of this century, he purchased for our museum many of the very best objects that came on the market, including our original paintings by George Catlin.

Wanamaker financed Stewart Culin's expedition among the western Indians for the University Museum in 1900, and paid for the Rodman Wanamaker expedition, an ambitious federal research project under President McKinley. He was also a major patron of Edward Curtis, contributing to Curtis' field work and to the publication of his monumental 48 Volume *American Indian*.

George Catlin was a self-taught artist who came from Wilkes-Barre and went into business as a Philadelphia portrait painter in the 1820's. His work shows much talent and acute powers of observation; because of his lack of formal training, his style has much in common with the American primitives, itinerant limners of eighteenth and nineteenth century America. Catlin fell under the spell of the American Indian, and left Philadelphia in 1830 to begin his long years of painting Indians beyond the frontier. He built up a remarkable gallery of Indian paintings, all done from life, many notebooks of pencil sketches and observations, and one of the most important ethnographic collections ever assembled in North America. He published many accounts of the Indians, and was a notable spokesman for justice and understanding toward the Indian. His most important publication was a detailed account of the Okipa, the elaborate sun dance ritual of the Mandan Indians. This book, published in Philadelphia, may be the world's earliest example of a scientific ethnographic study based upon field observations. It included lithographs of the successive stages of the ritual, done after Catlin's on-the-spot paintings. These paintings are among the greatest treasures of the University Museum, purchased for us by John Wanamaker.



FRANCES EYMAN obtained her B.A. in Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania and has done graduate work at Columbia University and the University of New Mexico where she did ethnological field work with the Navajo. She has been instructor in the Educational Departments of the American

Museum of Natural History in New York and of this Museum and is presently Keeper of Collections in the American Section. While her work is with all of these collections, her particular interest is in documented pieces and how they will help fill in gaps in the ethnological history of the North American Indian.

Catlin went into business as a showman in 1837, traveling widely with his gallery of portraits and his exhibits. His main incentive was as an apologist for the Indian; he hoped to overcome the prejudice and injustice which were so rapidly destroying the life of his native friends. These efforts earned him the contemptuous nickname "Indian-loving Catlin" among politicians and those identified with the westward expansion.

His exhibits were well received in Europe, and he settled for long intervals at the Egyptian Hall in London. He did not take any Indians to Europe with him, and in fact never lured an Indian away from home. In Europe Catlin found a number of destitute Indians who had been abandoned by other showmen. He employed them to work in his gallery, awaiting a chance to send them home. Dependent upon admission fees, he became financially overextended. The long illness and death of his wife and son left him bankrupt, and creditors were about to seize his gallery, his collections, and all of his other effects.

In this crisis, Joseph Harrison, Jr. of Philadelphia came to terms with Catlin's more pressing creditors, and in return carried the paintings and specimens off to Philadelphia. Here they were stored in an industrial warehouse and in the loft of a boiler factory. They were noted as part of Harrison's estate in 1879, and were donated to the Smithsonian Institution by Harrison's heirs. However, destruction by roof leaks, fire, and water had been extreme, and only a small part of Catlin's ethnographic specimens had survived decay. The few specimens in other collections, such as those we hold, were presumably deposited by Catlin with his publishers, traded to other collectors before his London disaster, or seized by other creditors in London.

Catlin did later paintings and ethnographic studies in California and the Northwest and in South America, but his heart and morale had been badly damaged by his losses in London, and his later accomplishments were somewhat puny as compared to his great triumphs along the Missouri, the Arkansas, and the other interior rivers where he befriended and studied peoples who had all but gone under in his later years. His early gallery and collections were unique and irreplaceable, and the parts that have survived are important anthropological documents.

The pipe heads in our collection are thus of major significance as a group associated with Catlin, and merit close study. The one with the bear carving has been noted and published several times, but not in any adequate manner. I recently worked it over because it obviously needed cautious repair. It had been broken across the



A pipe head of grey weathered catlinite with poured-on pewter inlays collected by George Catlin in the 1830's, but probably made several decades earlier. The file marks on and near the bowl are a recent mutilation. This carving, with its suggestive treatment of the bear about to charge, is from the early or primitive stage of Dakota sculpture, when impressionistic rather than realistic treatment of life-forms prevailed. In this stage, which dates about 1800, the Dakota had seized exclusive control of the Minnesota catlinite quarries and had begun their commerce in catlinite pipes with other tribes. In earlier times the pipestone quarries had been a sacred area, to which all tribes had peaceable access. Length 5 inches. University Museum, Catalog No. 38379.



An archeological pipe head (locality unknown) of red catlinite with a bison head as the prow. It has a rich wine-red patina and comes from an early stage in the evolution of Dakota sculpture styles. It was probably carved prior to 1800. Length 4 inches. Collection of the late Frank H. Neidley, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

neck at some time in the past and rejoined by an inept preparator. His joint had separated from intrinsic faults in the repair. When I worked on the pipe, I found that the two parts were still enclosed in a poured-in metal inlay which had not broken, and which loosely held the parts together. The joint had been made with a plastic cement, but the two halves had not been glued tightly. Because the bad joint left a space, this had been filled with alcohol-soluble tile cement, into which the twisted metal strips were pressed. The surfaces had then been filed to make the job look good and painted over.

The glue, tile cement, and paint had to be removed with the appropriate solvents and cautious mechanical cleaning before a proper repair could be made. As I pondered these problems, I noticed that the whole pipe bowl was thickly filmed with grease and industrial grime from much handling and long exposure to smog in exhibit cases. I cleaned and repaired the specimen, and found that its most important features had been concealed by modern dirt.

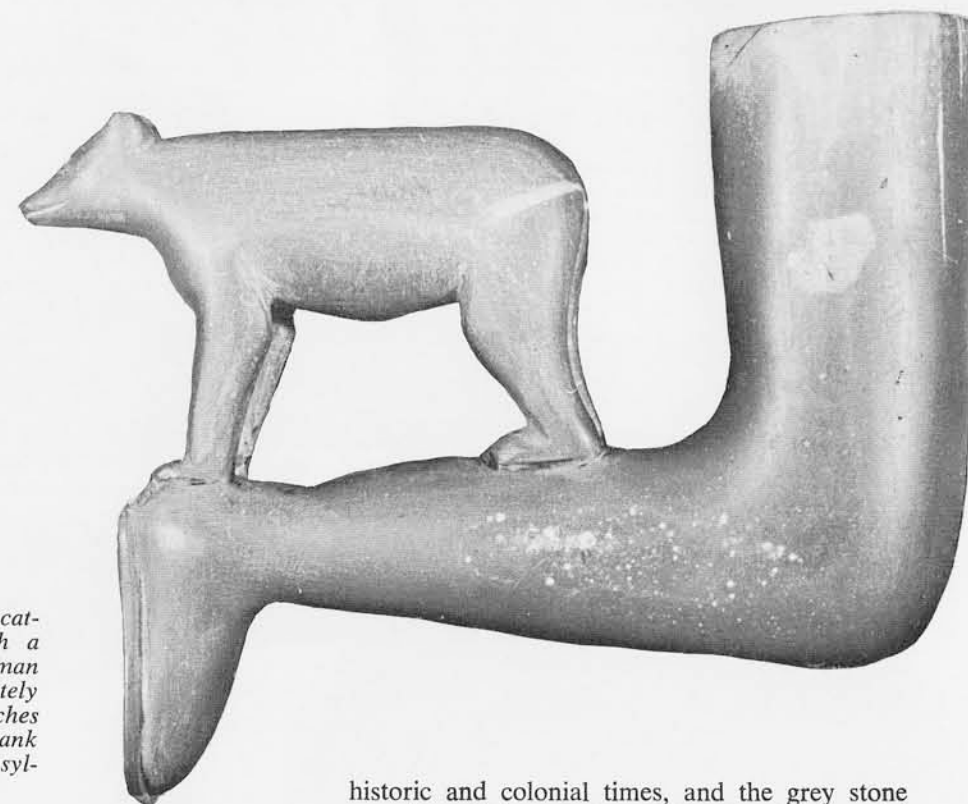
After the glue and other modern excrescences had been removed, I placed the pipe in a hot solution of mild soap for prolonged cleaning, after which I rinsed it in hot running water and laid it on a towel to dry, all without touching the surfaces with my hands or with metal tools. As it drained, the modern file cuts dried immediately, as do recent cuts into old surfaces of porous

stone. Old tool marks, old wear, and the details of the materials became apparent as the specimen dried, and were studied under magnification without touching the specimen with the hands, since this leaves a film of grease on the surface and obscures all details.

The spaces between the legs of the animal had been roughed out by drilling, apparently with a steel bit. This had been followed by whittling and scraping with a slender-pointed steel knife. The whole pipe had been carved with a knife, and there were no traces of any old file marks. The bowl and stem holes had been drilled with steel bits, although the pipe had been smoked enough so that the actual surfaces were more or less coated. Most of the work might be called scraped rather than whittled, for there were no massive cut-marks.

According to our catalog record, the pipe is of slate. John Witthoft of the Pennsylvania State Museum, who has published a photograph for comparison with Cherokee pipe heads, identified the material as limestone. When the surfaces were cleaned, its appearance was entirely different from that of slate or limestone. Its texture, mottling pattern, color, and infinitely fine grain size were

A Dakota pipe head of pink catlinite, made about 1870, with a bear carved standing upon a human leg. The pipe was moderately smoked and used. It is 5 1/3 inches long. Collection of the late Frank H. Neidley, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.



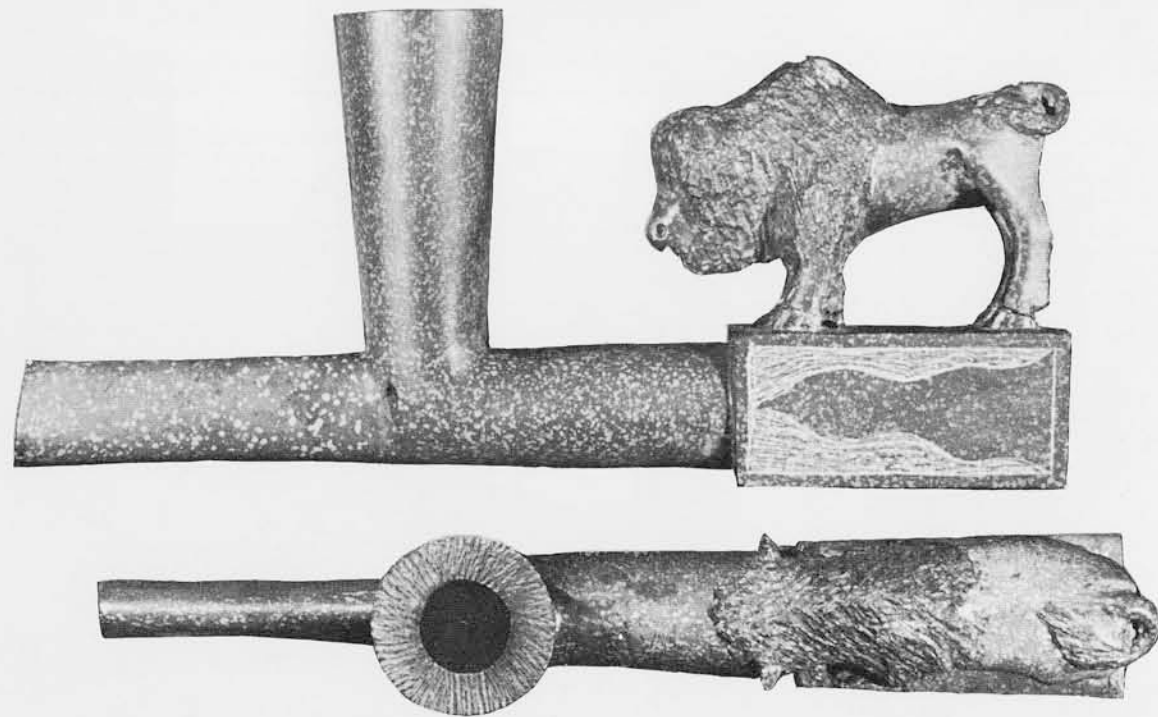
those of the so-called pipestones of the Midwest. The details are not like that of the Portsmouth fireclay of Ohio nor that of the other alumina shales known in many pipes.

Our bear pipe was carved from a poorly-recognized variant of Minnesota catlinite. At the sacred pipestone quarries in Pipestone County, Minnesota, modern mining is deep into the virgin rock, and red pipestone in massive blocks is generally equated with this locality. However, talus above the red stone and superficial zones of the rock have been deeply weathered and altered by long exposure to the elements, and have lost their red coloration. Except for coloration, the grey catlinite has the same characteristics as the red. The grey stone was a favorite material for pipes of the so-called Micmac type in the early eighteenth century, and it is found in ancient disc-pipes of the protohistoric Oneota culture, the oldest kind of identifiable calumet, but has scarcely been used since A.D. 1800, as the red stone has become the fashion. Apparently the first catlinite known to Indians and carved into pipes was from the surface of the outcrop and was grey. Later mining of the catlinite penetrated to the unaltered red zones. Both remained in use through proto-

historic and colonial times, and the grey stone came into disfavor before 1800. Thus the material of our pipe is tied to a Minnesota source; the choice of material suggests an early date for the specimen.

Cast-in inlays form an ornamental network around the pipe and outline the ribs of the bear. The inlay is of pewter (tin alloyed with small amounts of lead and other metals) rather than lead. The eyes are formed by tiny pewter plugs inserted into drill-holes, and protrude slightly above the face. Inlays of lead are commonplace on later calumets and on some other ethnographic objects. Pewter is an uncommon material, seldom found except on old specimens. Cast-in inlays on stone pipes are known from the Strickler Site, Susquehannock Indians of 1630-75, at Washingtonboro, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, where this technique was used to rejoin broken pipes. The casting technique has a long history, and is still used by Dakota and Iroquois craftsmen today.

In the modern technique, channels and hollows are carved deeply into the object, with several channels extending to one end of the piece to form gates. Then the object is wrapped with paper, birchbark, or leather, and tightly bound. Very hot molten lead is then quickly poured into the space between object and wrapping. The technique is old in Europe. It is often seen on the wooden handles of Renaissance table knives and forks, where pewter decor was applied. It was



A Dakota pipe head of mottled red catlinite, with a bison standing upon the stem. It was probably made about 1890, and has not been smoked or used. It represents the last stage in Dakota sculpture, when realistic portrayal was one of its ideals. In this stage, the Dakota made large numbers of plain calumet heads, which they sold to the Hudson's Bay Company and which were retailed in Canadian trading posts. Some of the Dakota artists, who made a business of carving catlinite, attained great technical skill in the carving of pipestone. Length 7 inches. Collection of the late Frank H. Neidley, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

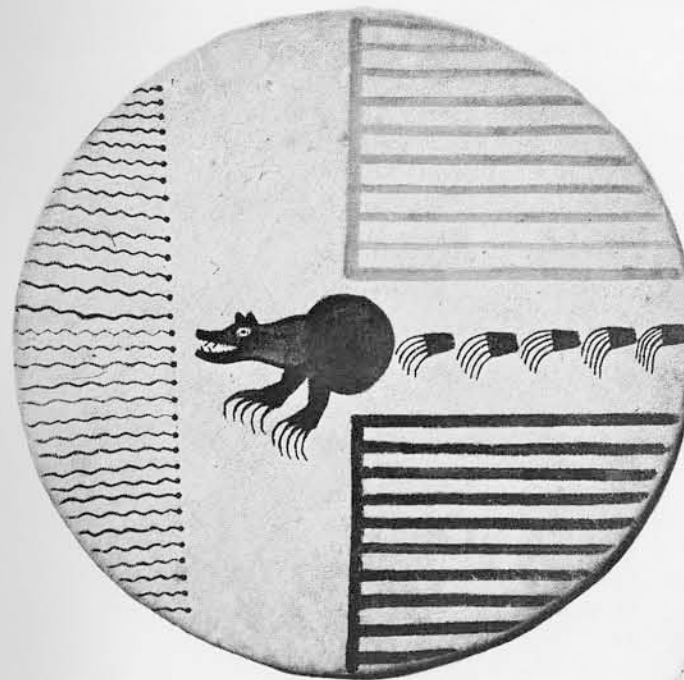
widely used for loading canes, for making a heavy club of a walking stick with lead inlays and inserts. Our Indians used it mainly for repairing broken stone pipes, ornamenting pipes, and weighting the heads of snowsnakes, the sliding javelins that are thrown for distance in an Iroquois game. It is apparently a European technique adopted by Indians in the seventeenth century and since widely used.

Tool marks on the pipe indicate that it was carved by a man who had steel knives, steel drill points, and fine sandstone and shale grinding

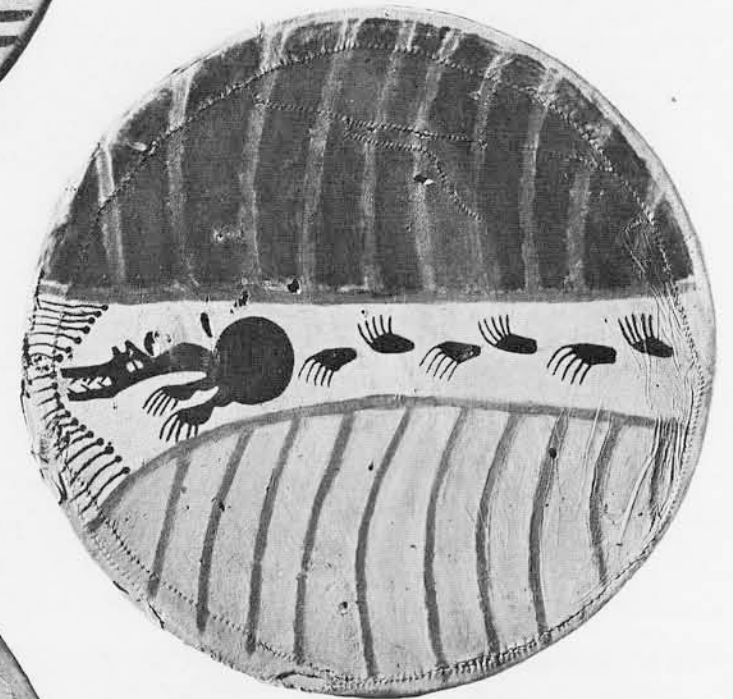
stones, but no files. He had an iron ladle for melting metal, and he used pewter, an obsolete material in 1830. His inlays were leveled down and smoothed with stone. The inlay on the elbow of the pipe may have been a repair, but it does appear to be older than the break. The pipe has been much handled but is not deeply worn. It has been smoked many times, but has been cleaned carefully and used very gently. It appears that the specimen was neither new nor old when collected by Catlin, and that it may have been made as early as 1800.

The artist has caught the form and stance of the grizzly in a simple, effective way. This creature, the most aggressive, volatile, and hardy of American carnivores, was a familiar part of the Plains Indian's environment. He was the most powerful medicine animal of the Plains, at the peak of the hierarchy of creatures who offered their friendship and help as guardian spirits to youths during the puberty vision quest. Their claws were frequently worn as necklaces, their lower jaws were shaped into handles for steel fighting knives, and their pictures and symbols were painted onto rawhide shields. All emblems of the grizzly were surrounded with magical power and respect for the strength and courage of the animal.

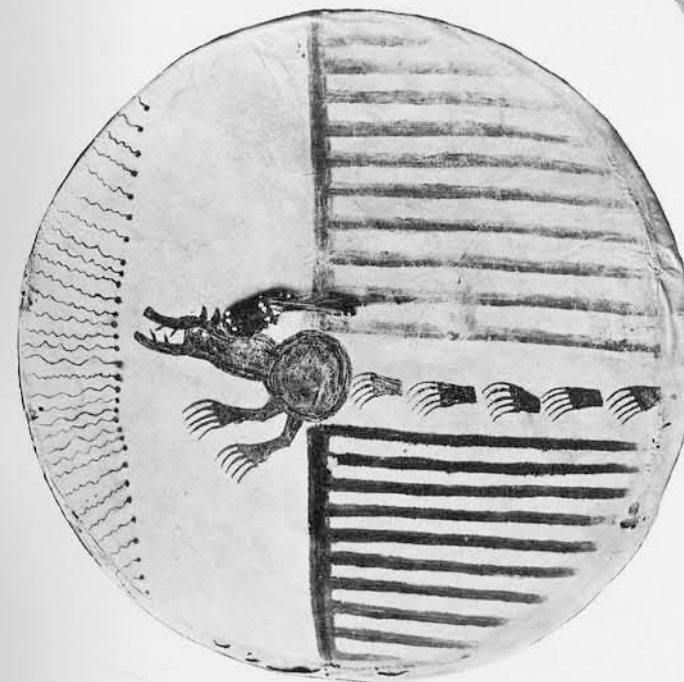
Although small populations of the Rocky



Design on a Kiowa shield, painted in red and black, representing a grizzly bear charging into a rain of bullets. Designs on shields and shield covers were powerful magical devices in Plains Indian concepts of warfare. Our illustration is an Indian artist's miniature of a Kiowa shield; this model is in the United States National Museum, Cat. No. 229,889. The actual shield was the property of Kicking Bird, who died in 1875. It was later carried by his cousin Stumbling Bear, who died in 1903. Our drawing was made for James Mooney about 1900. The shield had originally come to the Kiowa from the Crow, from whom it had been captured by an earlier Kiowa, also called Kicking Bird, in times prior to the removal of the Kiowa from the North.



Similar designs are seen on two Crow shields in the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago. They support the idea that the Kiowa design was copied from the Crow. The first (above), Cat. No. 71,832, was collected from the Crow, Big Bear, by S. C. Simms in 1902. The second (left), Cat. No. 62,578, was collected by W. J. Hoffman. Donald Collier, who has studied shield symbols among the Kiowa, notes that the Kiowa still feel some special affinity for the Crow as a result of their earlier proximity in the North. His Kiowa informants believed that the grizzly bear and bullet motif had been borrowed from the Crow during visits to Montana in the mid-nineteenth century.



Mountain grizzly still survive today, we know little about the biology of the creature, almost nothing about its varieties and former distribution. The traditional knowledge of Indians and a few scraps in older writings suggest that grizzlies were widespread and important on the Plains, and that they included varieties or species of bears that are now extinct. No skull or skin of a Plains grizzly is known to have survived, and our only hope is that bones from Plains archaeological sites may be found in enough quantity to show us more about the formidable bear of the Plains.

According to Indian belief, the bear of the Plains was larger and more hostile than even the Rocky Mountain grizzly, with scant soft fur of a light yellow color. The Ojibwa name for him means, "His hair has been blown away." He is generally referred to as the yellow bear or the naked bear. Bear, wolf, and man were triple partners in predation and symbiosis upon the bison herd, and their survival was bound to the herd. Each lived by harvesting as he might from the fringes of the herd.

The bison population of the Plains was divided into a number of very large herds or super-herds, each of which was an interbreeding unit. Each herd was subject to periodic, systematic movements which we only poorly understand. Some of these were seasonal north-south or east-west migrations of a compact body of a whole super-herd. At other times they were divided into small or moderately large herds and groups scattered over a large range. It is today impossible to delimit and map the super-herds or map and describe their seasonal movements; not enough observations were recorded in the days before these herds were exterminated. In each case, whether in migration with the super-herd or in a small grazing group, the bison was a gregarious herd-animal whose protection and survival depended upon his closeness to others in a compact group.

The Plains wolf and the Plains bear were apparently symbiotic upon specific herds, the herd rather than a geographic region being the territory of the carnivore. The wolves followed the herd wherever it went and in all weather, in blizzard practically running under the hoofs of the vanguard, in good weather watching from a distance. They are described as larger than the timber wolf and blonde in color. They were unable to attack animals in the herd, but they ate stillborn calves, and they killed stragglers from the herd, diseased, aged, or defective bison. The bison had no fear of the wolf, and the Indian hunter often disguised himself in a wolf skin to creep close to the edge of the herd.

If the wolf pack might be compared to the sheep dogs of the bison herd, the bear has been aptly called the shepherd of the herd. It is possible that the bear, with his great strength, was able to take adult bison from the flanks of the herd, but it is more likely that he, like the wolf, culled out the defective animals. The bear was a real hazard to men, for he attacked hunters who killed the bison, appearing as a ferocious guardian. Unfortunately, these magnificent animals are long extinct; the early white bison hunters, who were deathly afraid of both wolf and bear, wiped them out with poisoned bison carcasses.

The great bison herds had followed their seasonal rounds over the American prairies for tens of thousands of years, shifting their range as the climate changed but preserving their continuity through long ages. Bears and wolves must always have tracked with them, maintaining their own genetic continuity as creatures tied to the herd. In Pleistocene times, larger bison prevailed and larger predators kept pace with them. The bear and wolf of the Plains may well have had a long history quite separate from that of their woodland relatives. Man, the greatest predator that nature has produced, has been part of the life of the bison herd for much more than ten thousand years. The life of the Plains Indian, with his ecological and spiritual interlocks with bison, wolf, and bear, was the end product of long evolution of human culture to the world of the bison herd. Man met bear on the fringes of the herd, and acted out some of the grand dramas of nature in conflict with the grizzly and in his thought about the grizzly. Now most of this world of insight is lost in dead time. Only a few mute art objects and symbols remain of the great adventure staged by man and nature on the prairies.

21

SUGGESTED READING

- GEORGE CATLIN, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians*. 2 vols. New York, 1841 (and later editions).
Catlin's Notes of Eight Years' Travels and Residence in Europe. 2 vols. New York, 1848.
- JOHN C. EWERS, "George Catlin, Painter of Indians and the West." *Smithsonian Annual Report for 1955*, pp. 483-528. Washington, 1956.
- LOYD HABERLY, *Pursuit of the Horizon: A Life of George Catlin, Painter and Recorder of the American Indians*. New York, 1948.
- MARJORIE HALPIN, *Catlin's Indian Gallery*. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, 1965.
- RENÉ THÉVENIN, *Animal Migration*. New York, 1965.