



These images show details of a French "L. Fiolet" pipe.

Fort Hays in western Kansas existed from 1866 to 1889 with a relatively small number of troops stationed there to protect the trail west. A great deal of material has been excavated from the fort and is preserved in the Archeology Laboratory of the Kansas State Historical Society. This article was prepared by Marshall Clark, a KSHS Archeology Lab volunteer, and is part of a series of articles focusing on daily life at historic Fort Hays.

## White Pipes

A very common artifact type found in abundance is the clay smoking pipe. Though smoking is fast becoming taboo in our society, it was extremely popular in the late nineteenth century.

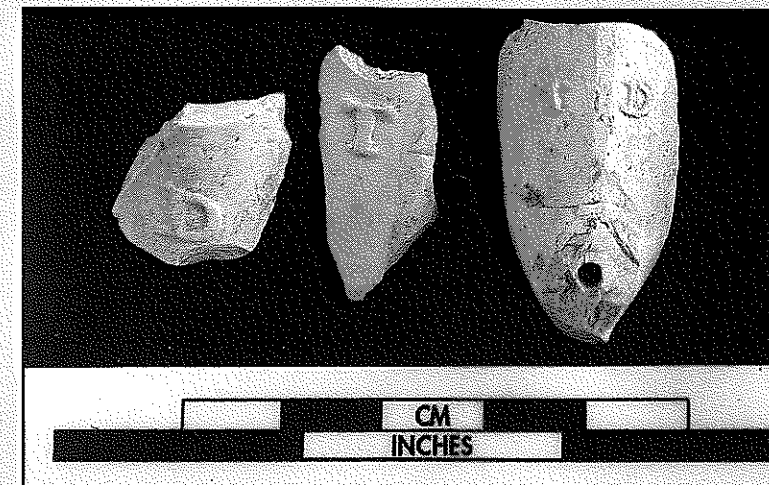
Several kinds of clays were used to make the pipes in this artifact group. The most common is the pure white "china clay." Other types include the buff-colored "domestic ball clay" and light gray "English ball clay." Something called "common clay" exists in red or brown shades. Occasionally, a stem was coated to prevent it from sticking to the lips.

Many pipe fragments are small stem portions, perhaps an inch or two in length. One of the most popular explanations is that as a pipe was passed from man to man, a bit of the stem was snapped off for sanitary reasons. Another more

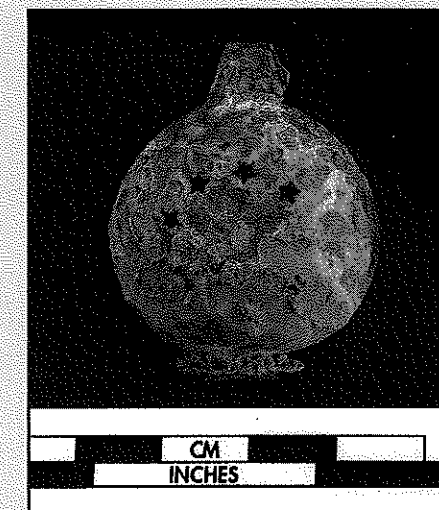
obtuse theory claims that pipe stems were broken off to get the smoker nearer to the warmth of the burning tobacco in freezing weather. If you have ever smoked a pipe, you might be skeptical of this idea.

The diameter of a pipe's stem hole is considered one of the best indicators for establishing an approximate age. Basically, the smaller the hole, the newer the pipe. However, by 1800 stem holes were as small as they could get and still be usable. Most of the Fort Hays pipes come from well past that date, so this method does not help us.

Another theory proposes that the thinner the pipe bowl, the older the pipe, but this is unproven. Yet another way of ascertaining age is through various markings or initials on the stems or bowls. Again, a problem exists: an initial on a bowl



Three examples of pipe fragments bearing the "T. D." markings.



Pipe lid with star-shaped holes.



The bowl of a "Catlins" common clay pipe.

probably was incorporated in the original design, and that mark stayed the same even if that model was produced for fifty years. Consequently, markings or initials are not very useful in accurate dating.

European pipes were so popular that they were copied in America, and the Fort Hays collection has several examples. For instance, a stem inscribed "Peter Dorn," represents the Dutch manufacturer Dorn. Another stem says, "L. Fiolet... Omer...depose." This indicates an item handmade by a French manufacturer that operated from 1768 to 1921. Not very useful! One bowl has the name "Catlins" on it. Several fragments bear the initials "T. D." My research turned up several possibilities, including a Thomas Dormer (1748-1770) and a Thomas Duggin (1805-1832), both English pipe makers. Then there is

Thomas Dennis of Bristol, who made pipes for the Indian trade up to about 1850. Which to choose? Bear in mind, these popular pipes could well have been copies. The bottom line for these ubiquitous relics is that, except for some very specifically marked items, their dates are best identified by their association with artifacts of known age.

When looking at these little pieces of the past, the pleasant thought comes through that at sometime in the colorful history of Fort Hays, soldiers guarding the trail were able to rest for bit with their comrades and enjoy a leisurely smoke while swapping tall tales, as soldiers at all their lonely outposts have done from time immemorial.



Daily Life at Historic Fort Hays