

University of Colorado Boulder

Analysis of a Ute Pipe and Pouch:

The Role of Gifts in Settler Colorado

Imagine, if you will, the kind of world Colorado was in the 19th century. At once brand new to some yet ancient to others, the Territory of Colorado became a battleground as American miners began to move into the mountains, displacing thousands of Ute through government treaties. The miners were drawn to the Territory, and later state, of Colorado because of rich mineral resources made available through the forced displacement of the Ute. The Homestead Act of 1862 also served to further incite people to move west, as it provided American citizens with 160 acres of land for settlement (Act of May 20). During this period of time, specifically the late 1870s, an important Ute Chief gifted an Anglo-American settler a beautifully ornamented pouch and pipe. In the 1950s, the pouch and pipe ended up at the CU Museum of Natural History through a donation by the settler's daughter. Through the analysis of the artifacts themselves, as well as their historical context, we can begin to see these artifacts as more than simply a pouch and a pipe and begin to understand them in their fully realized social, historical and cultural context.

This paper will focus on the analysis of two physical artifacts, a Ute pipe (UMC 13667) and pouch (UMC 13655), in the context of their time as well as their context in the CU Boulder museum collection. Through the study of these artifacts, I hope to illustrate the role of gifts in mid 19th century Colorado as they pertain to the Ute and new Anglo-American settlers. To begin, one must first have an understanding of the artifacts themselves. The pipe is comprised of two separate pieces, a wooden stem and a bowl presumed to be made of yellow clay (see Exhibit 2). The bowl forms a 90 degree angle and is approximately 5.08 cm long. The pipe stem measures 17.78 cm long. Both the bowl and pipe stem show signs of tobacco residue, suggesting that they were indeed used and not simply decorative.

Before a description of the pouch is given, a brief note on the language used in this paper is necessary. It should be noted that this specific artifact has been called many things; bag, pouch, pipe bag, medicine pouch, and a tobacco pouch. For the sake of clarity I will refer to it as a pouch. Later in the paper, I will examine these names and their significance, and posit which is most appropriate based off the information we have available to us.

The pouch measures 49.5 cm long, and 16.5 cm wide (see Exhibit 1). Upon first glance, one would assume that the interior was a cohesive storage area, however a closer look reveals a raised line coinciding with the end of the largest geometric diamond design. This ridge is the result of a stitched seam running along the backside of the pouch, signaling the end of the storage area and the beginning of the decorative triangular flap that hangs below the pouch. The back of the pouch also has another stitched seam on the left side. This one appears to have been reparative.

What is immediately striking about the pouch is the beadwork that covers almost the entire front. The pouch includes white, green, dark blue, red, yellow, light blue, and Cornaline d'Alleppeo-a Venetian bead made of carnelian stone-beads. Countless rows of lazy stitched white beads compromise the background for a large, geometric diamond design, with edges that resemble a crow-stepped gable. In the center of the diamond is a brick of yellow beads, bordered on the left and right by a thin single column of blue beads, and to the top and bottom by two blue crescent shapes. These blue crescent shapes are nearly identical to another pair of crescents located three rows of beadwork below the diamond. The edges of the triangular flap are decorated with, from the outside, a series of what appear to be dark blue beads in the shape of a wide pyramid that form an interlocking pattern with a series of red bead pyramids. Working our

way closer to the center of the design, the triangular flap is decorated with a solid border of green beads.

The top of the diamond design signals the end of the beadwork on the front of the pouch. However, the end of the flap that is pulled over and tied to close the pouch is decorated with beadwork as well. Much like the rest of the pouch, it is decorated with a background of lazy stitched white beads with three beadwork designs near the bottom center of the flap. The designs each resemble an uppercase I and are conjoined at the top and bottom. The outermost designs are done in black beads, while the center one is made of yellow beads. A string hangs down from the flap for tying the pouch shut. It should be noted that while the beadwork is very fine, it is done at a slight slant, most prominent above the triangular flap. Otherwise, the pouch is in good condition, although a few columns of beads have been lost over time. Now that a physical description of the artifacts has been provided, we can begin to delve deeper into their history.

An interesting aspect of these artifacts is that they were disconnected for a time. Both were in the University of Colorado Museum of Natural History, but were stored separately and not known to have been related. However, a grad student working in the museum noticed in the records a letter from the donor of both objects saying that they were meant to be together. This new information allows us to analyze the pouch and pipe in their fully realized context, rather than as incomplete singular artifacts severed from one another.

CU museum records indicate that this pouch was gifted by Chief Ouray to W.S. Home between the period of 1878-1880. The artifacts ended up in the CU museum through Jeanne Home, the daughter of W.S. Home. In a letter to the President of the University of Colorado dated 1950, Jeanne Home, stated:

I have in my possession a beaded Indian bag, 20x7 inches, given by Chief Ouray of the

Utes to my father, W.S. Home, around 1880. I was told it was made by Princess Chipeta, buried near Ouray, Colo., and also told it was made to hold a peace pipe, the bowl and stem of which are still in the bag.

Through correspondence with the President of CU Boulder and the Board of Regents, Jeanne arranged to have her “Indian trophies” bequeathed to the museum upon her death, as she felt CU Boulder was the most geographically appropriate home for them. At some point in the intervening years between then and 2015, the pouch and pipe were separated. To fully understand the story and significance of these artifacts, we must first understand the players surrounding their creation and use.

Chief Ouray was born in Taos, New Mexico in 1833 to a mother belonging to the Uncompahgre Ute tribe, and a father who was half Jicarilla Apache. Ouray grew up speaking Spanish and English, and did not learn Ute or Apache until later in his life. In 1851, Ouray gave up his existence of sheep herding in New Mexico and moved to western Colorado. Ouray joined the Tabeguache Ute, as his father had recently become a respected leader of the tribe. In 1858, Ouray married his first wife Black Mare. Together, they had a child, Queashegut. Unfortunately for Ouray, shortly after the birth of Queashegut, Black Mare died and 5 years later Queashegut was kidnapped by Sioux while out with Ouray on a buffalo hunt. After the death of Black Mare, Ouray married the then 16 year old Chipeta. Upon his father's death in 1860, Ouray became Chief of the Tabeguache Ute of Colorado. Ouray went on to play a vital role as a peacemaker between the United States and the Ute until 1880, when he passed away from Bright's disease at the Ignacio Agency, after traveling there to negotiate more with the federal government (Jefferson 35).

Chipeta was born in 1843 around the Conejos area of Colorado. Chipeta was born Kiowa Apache but was adopted into the Uncompahgre tribe of Utes. After her marriage to Ouray,

Chipeta became an important leader as well and was regarded as wise and intelligent. Chipeta was also reputed to be extremely talented in the arts of beadwork and tanning (McCook). Ouray and Chipeta lived together on a ranch south of present day Montrose from 1875 until Ouray's death in 1880.

The next player in this story is a much greater mystery than either Ouray or Chipeta. William S. Home "helped develop s.w. Colo[rado]" according to his daughter Jeanne in her letters to the museum (Home). No mentions of the name exist in death, birth, marriage, court, or other records from the region and timeframe. Perhaps because she did not view it as important, Jeanne omitted vital information about her father's occupation and his residence. This information would allow us to better examine the context and meaning of the gift. However, for this paper I am working under the assumption that W.S. Home was one of many thousands of men who flocked to Colorado after the discovery of gold in Denver in 1859, or after one of the subsequent mineral rushes such as Pikes Peak or the San Juan Cession. Home could also have been a trapper, although that trade had been steadily declining for roughly 3 decades before this gift was given to Home ("A Brief History of the Fur Trade").

Now that we have the necessary knowledge about the people connected to these artifacts, we can begin to look into the cultural and historical context of the period in order to gain an understanding of the purpose of this gift. The Ute have inhabited Colorado for longer than recorded time and resided there, isolated from the European world, until the Spanish made contact in the 18th century. Their way of life was changed little through these interactions. However, trappers began to move into Ute territory in the 19th century in search of beaver and other profitable skins. Around the 1840s, as more permanent trade settlements began to appear in the area, the Ute started to trade beaver pelts and buffalo robes to Anglo-Americans for goods

such as cloth, tobacco, whiskey, flour, and trinkets (Jefferson 45). The eventual decline of the fur trade in the second half of the 19th century gave the Ute hope they would be able to retain most of their ancestral lands after the trappers departed. However, with the discovery of mineral wealth in the San Juan mountains and surrounding areas came a great influx of miners and other white settlers who would eventually forcibly displace the Ute.

Tensions continued to rise between the Ute and the Anglo-Americans as more land was taken. For instance, as per the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, signed in 1848 by the United States and Mexico, the United States honored Spanish and Mexican land grants that overlapped with Ute territory (Jefferson 19). This angered many Utes, as many had been assured the rights to their lands through previous treaties with the United States government.

After Ouray's ascension to chief and his marriage to Chipeta, tensions between the United States government and the Ute resulted in a conference being called at the Conejos agency in 1863. Ouray was in attendance, along with representatives from all bands of Ute. The Tabeguache Ute resisted the efforts of the United States to get them to move, but they did agree to stay within a reservation and give up some land in return for livestock and goods for 10 years. The Ute made a wise decision, giving up land that was already infested with settlers, and in return getting material goods and food to supplement the declining wild game in Colorado. Despite the agreement, however, the United States never delivered these goods to the Ute (Jefferson 22).

After a particularly rough winter in 1864, with little buffalo left to hunt, some Ute were forced to beg in Colorado City and around the San Luis valley for food (Jefferson 22). This begging, partly a result of the United States not holding up their end of the 1863 agreement, reportedly caused tensions and led people to petition the government for the removal of the Ute.

This resulted in the calling of a D.C. conference, which Ouray attended. On March 2nd, 1868, representatives from 7 bands of Ute met with United States officials. They agreed on the creation of a single reservation in the western third of Colorado, with an Indian Agency to be built on the Los Pinos river. During this trip to D.C., Ouray was designated chief of the Ute by the U.S. government. In reality, the U.S. simply designated him spokesperson to simplify their interactions with the Ute. After the matter was settled, the Ute leaders returned to Colorado to tell their people about their new reservation.

Shortly after the Ute left for the Los Pinos agency, it was discovered that the San Juan mountains were rich with minerals and other resources. Thus, the Ute were once again directly in the middle of land desired by Anglo-Americans. Miners began to move into the San Juan mountains in great numbers especially from 1871 to 1876 (Jefferson 95). Eventually, the Ute signed the Brunot Agreement of 1874, ceding the Brunot area, including much of the San Juans, to the United States (Berry). This agreement gave up the San Juan mountains, the heart of Ute land, and opened it up for miners to settle, even though they already had begun to settle before the agreement was signed. This treaty led to a period of relative peace, but an event at the White River agency in 1879 would bring tensions back to a boil.

Nathaniel Meeker was an employee of the federal government, sent to the White River Reservation to be the Indian Agent. His job was to distribute supplies to the White River Ute, as well as to “civilize” them. Meeker was appointed in 1878 and began attempting to convert the Ute from their ways of horse racing and hunting to agriculture and pastoralism. He wanted them to build permanent houses and begin farming, while the Ute simply wanted to continue on with their way of life. Frustrated, one day Meeker ordered a worker to begin plowing a field that he knew was an important horse racing and grazing field. Meeker began to plow the 200 acre plot

with no regard to the wishes of the Ute, when he was confronted by a few Ute, including Chief Douglas (Dawson 11). While it initially appeared that Meeker and Chief Douglas had reached an agreement, eventually the situation escalated to the point where some Ute fired a warning shot off at the plowmen. Meeker reacted by calling for the army, which the Ute took as a declaration of war.

Days passed and the army began to approach the reservation, violating various treaties signed between the Ute and the United States government. Ouray, ever an advocate for peace between the Ute and the United States, urged the White River Ute to not fight. The following is the message that Ouray sent via courier to the White River agency after hearing about the events:

You are hereby requested and commanded to cease hostility against the whites, injuring no innocent persons or any others further than to protect your own lives and property from unlawful and unauthorized combinations of horse thieves and desperadoes, as anything further will ultimately end in disaster to all parties. (Dawson 78)

Despite Ouray's order, a group of Ute warriors went out to meet the command led by Major Thornburgh and engaged in a lengthy battle that lasted for six days and ended only when the American troops received backup cavalry. While this was going on, Ute warriors attacked and killed Meeker, along with seven other agency employees (Dawson 51). The Ute who attacked the agency also held three women and two children hostage for 23 days, one of them Meeker's wife and another his daughter. These events would go down in popular history as the White River War, although the Meeker Massacre is the most well remembered part of this conflict. I provide this information about the White River War and Meeker Massacre to help convey the political and social atmosphere of Colorado during the years 1879 and 1880, which will allow us to understand this gift better.

An analysis of material Ute culture and of the artifacts themselves offers an insightful glimpse into their history and can be used in an attempt to roughly verify the dates these artifacts

were created. The Ute utilized hide to make most of their clothing and items. Sheep, deer, antelope and elk were used for everyday purposes, while bison and bear hides were made into robes (Fowler 97). As for beadwork, the Ute were practitioners since the introduction of large glass pony beads by the European settlers and traders in the late 18th and early 19th century. It was the introduction of seed beads, a bead much smaller than pony beads, in the mid 19th century that spurred the Ute on to create the kinds of designs that we associate with them most today. During the 1870s, diamonds, hourglasses, and other geometric designs were very popular on Ute beaded artwork (Bates 152). This information allows us to presume with relative confidence that this pouch was most likely created during the 1870s, lining up with the account Jeanne Home gave in her letters. Using this knowledge, we can also presume that the pouch was not created any later than the 1880s, as Craig D. Bates notes in his report on Ute artistic style and culture, "...by the end of the 1880s, these bags seem to have disappeared from photographs of Ute people" (Bates 152).

The pouch appears to be crafted of buckskin, matching up with other Ute pouches and bags from various museum collections. The geometric designs present on the front of the pouch, as well as the lazy stitch style of beading, serve as strong indicators that this pouch was created by the Ute during the 1870s. Jeanne Home states in her letter that she was told Chipeta made the pouch. While, much to my dismay, there is no way to verify this claim, we can utilize what we know about Chipeta and the Ute to try and figure out the likelihood of her involvement.

Chipeta was highly regarded as a skilled craftsperson (McCook). After her marriage to Ouray, Chipeta was known to make him clothing, as well as to decorate it intricately with beadwork. Thus, the claim by Jeanne Home that the pouch was crafted by Chipeta herself does not seem improbable. After examining other objects made by Chipeta, such as Ouray's own pipe

bag, one may immediately think that this pouch was made by a different person because it is not as uniform as other examples of her beadwork. One should keep in mind though that this pouch was likely created in the 1870s, over 30 years before the other artifacts attributed to Chipeta were created, such as a toy cradleboard created by Chipeta around 1915 that showcases her immense talent with the art form. This piece has also naturally deteriorated over time and lost a few rows of beads, so it is not as immaculate as other pieces. Also, if I am correct in assuming that this pouch was created expressly for the purpose of being gifted as a sign of good relations and peace, as I will elaborate on soon, then it stands to reason that Chipeta would not spend as much time working on this pouch as she would for one destined to be Ouray's.

It should be noted that the shape and size of this pouch is unusual. Throughout my research I have been unable to locate any similarly sized pouch with a triangular tail flap. However, I have encountered objects that appear to be miniature versions of this bag. Ute knife sheaths closely resemble this bag, although much smaller. But they retain the style of decoration and general shape. More importantly however, there exists a photo of Chipeta taken in 1870 wearing what is called a "tail pouch" that appears very similar to this pouch, albeit smaller (see Exhibit 3). It is possible this was a style favored by Chipeta, and perhaps this bag was an experiment of hers at making a larger sized tail pouch. The pipe also does not appear to be of popular Ute style, as the Ute tended to favor much longer pipes with T shaped stone bowls of catlinite (Bates 157).

As for the designation of this artifact as a pouch, I have chosen to refer to it as such due to the size of the container. While our records indicate it is a pipe bag, no other pipe bags exist that look like this one. Also, when Terry Knight, NAGPRA Coordinator, viewed the object at the CU museum he said it was not a pipe bag due to its shape and length, and instead that it was a

medicine or tobacco bag (UMC 13655). I believe this may explain the unusualness of this pouch as a pipe bag, if it was instead a tobacco or medicine pouch gifted with a more western styled pipe inside.

With the historical information I have laid out, we can begin to hypothesize the purpose of this gift. Jeanne Home said the pouch and pipe were given to her father around 1880. This was a tumultuous time period in Colorado for the Ute, with the aforementioned White River War having just occurred. We can presume that William Home, as an early settler of southwestern Colorado, was most likely a participant in the Anglo-American rush to exploit the San Juan mountains that were opened by the Brunot Agreement, which was a major factor and exacerbator of the tensions between the Ute and the United States in this period. Ouray, who was derisively called “White Man’s Friend”, lived with Chipeta near Montrose and frequently interacted with settlers and was known to attempt to keep the peace between his people and the United States government. It is my presumption that W.S. Home was given this gift by Chief Ouray in 1880, as Ouray and Chipeta travelled south from their home to the Indian Agency at Ignacio, near the border with New Mexico. They were going to negotiate further with the United States about the various treaties regarding land rights. Their journey would have taken them south of Montrose, around the towns of Ouray, Telluride, and others. Ouray and Telluride were both still towns in their infancy, founded by miners seeking gold in the mid to late 1870s. While thorough searches through the death, birth, census, marriage, and other records of these and other early southwestern mining towns gave no indication as to where W.S. Home lived or died, it is probable that he lived in a town or settlement around the area that Ouray and Chipeta travelled. As Jeanne Home said in her letter, W.S. Home “helped develop s.w. Colo[rado]”. Even if this gift was not passed onto Home during this exact voyage of Ouray’s, it is possible that Ouray

encountered Home sometime during this period, and passed on the pipe and pouch as a sign of peace in light of the White River war. Ouray and Chipeta may have encountered many miners and settlers, as they frequently left the agency they resided at when they were not in Montrose and went hunting in the mountains (Jefferson 52). The pouch and pipe would have served as a symbol of friendship between Ouray and Home and as a symbol of friendship between the Ute and the new inhabitants of their land. It seems in the style of Ouray to attempt to mitigate any tensions between the two groups, or to put it simply, to make the best of a bad situation. It is also possible the pipe and pouch were meant to serve another, slightly different purpose.

While the following may be a stretch, I cannot help but recall the story of Father Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet, two Frenchmen who explored the northern Mississippi river in 1673 and encountered Osage, Shawnee and other tribes. While travelling on the Mississippi near present day St. Louis, Marquette and his company were suddenly attacked by an unidentified group of Natives. In his colorful writing style, Marquette describes the seemingly hopeless scene; Natives armed with clubs, arrows, and shields surrounding them on the shore and jumping into the water to attack. But previously on their journey, Marquette and Joliet were given a calumet, or peace pipe, by the Chief of an Illinois village they had visited who had warned them about hostile Natives down the river (Keller). The following is a translated excerpt from Marquette's own journal, describing the importance of the calumet:

In vain I showed The calumet, and made them signs that we were not coming to war against them. The alarm continued, and they were already preparing to pierce us with arrows from all sides, when God suddenly touched the hearts of the old men, who were standing at the water's edge. This no doubt happened through the sight of our Calumet, which they had not clearly distinguished from afar; but as I did not cease displaying it, they were influenced by it, and checked the ardor of their Young men. Two of these elders even,-after casting into our canoe, as if at our feet, Their bows and quivers, to reassure us-entered the canoe, and made us approach the shore, whereon we landed, not without fear on our part. (Keller)

Marquette and Joliet went on to spend the night with these Natives, and even learned from them that there were armed Europeans further south down the river. This information allowed Marquette and Joliet to avoid running into Spanish colonists and facing even greater danger. Instead, they turned around and headed back up the river, taking shortcuts that they were informed about by the initially hostile natives (Keller).

This interaction shows the cultural power of a peace pipe. Of course, the Ute are not the same as the Plains Indians and migratory tribes that Marquette and Joliet encountered. There is also the matter that Marquette's peace pipe incident occurred 200 years before Home was given the pipe and pouch by Ouray, when Native tribes had yet to be substantially influenced by Europeans. However, we can still glean from this interaction that the peace pipe, in certain contexts, was a gift meant to ensure safe travel or passage. A non-native having such a sacred object is probably meant to exemplify to other natives they encountered that they were coming in peace and have positive relations with other tribes.

The above, seeming tangential example, is meant to help contextualize these artifacts in a more specific context. Rather than just being a symbol of friendship between Ouray and Home, I believe it is possible that the pouch and pipe were given to Home to serve like the calumet Marquette was given. The White River war, combined with the tensions created by the relatively recent loss of millions of acres of Ute land in 1874 that Home and others were occupying, may have been enough to make Ouray fear for the safety of settlers, and subsequently the reputation and well-being of the Ute. Ouray, as a diplomat and man of peace, may have reached out to Home in this manner to assuage the settler's fear and to show him that the Ute were friendly.

Thanks to the serendipitous reconnection of these two artifacts, we have been able to examine them in a context unavailable to previous researchers. Knowing that these two artifacts

were meant to go together changes the significance of the gift and led to the emergence of a new discourse related to these objects and their intended use. Through historical and cultural analysis, we were able to, with relative assurance, verify the timeframe that these artifacts were purported to be created in, as well as verify that the style and materials used were extant in Ute culture. It is my hope that this paper has outlined the potential uses and meanings behind the gifting of a Ute pipe and pouch in mid 19th century Colorado.

Exhibit 1:



University of Colorado Museum of Natural History (13655)

Exhibit 2:



University of Colorado Museum of Natural History (13667)

Exhibit 3:



(Balster)

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