I do not believe that it is possible to teach sculpture, it is something that has to be experienced. I am writing this as an aid to those who are seeking information. If you can find a sculptor (carver) that is willing to give you advice, it would be a great advantage.

You will probably get your stone as a rough boulder, if you have gone to a mine dump to get your material. It may have broken areas and cracked areas showing. These pieces should be filed down to the base stone that can be carved. Oft times I have seen people try to work with the original found stone without roughing it to a basic shape. The carving may be almost completed before a portion of the carving cracks off.

To insure the completion of the carving, it would be better to take off the damaged areas with a

I do not intend to tell the reader what they should carve. I believe that the idea has to come from the mind of the carver. It will be a great deal easier if the carver can visualize the finished idea in the rough stone. There are aspects of carving that I can not write down in words, this one of them.

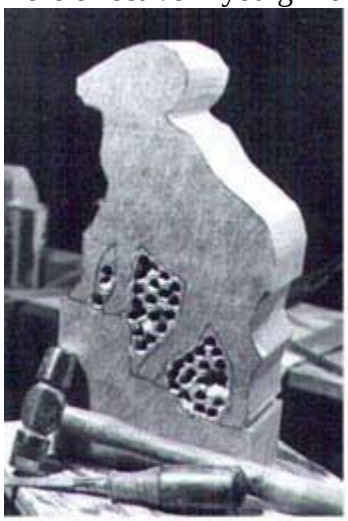
When starting with a cut piece of stone, I first make a template of my idea and copy it to the stone. I do this because, I have found that after I finish the carving, I can use the template to make changes for the next carving. I never seem to be satisfied with a carving, as soon as I finish it, I find things that displease me.

Copy the template on to the stone. I try to enlarge the template to get the most efficient use of the stone. I have used a pantograph for many years to do this. Lately I have considered the use of the computer to enlarge my templates.

To remove large amounts on stone, use a saw. I have used every kind of saw from a crosscut to a hacksaw depending on the size of the stone. One of the benefits of working in soapstone is that it absorbs heat. This allows the sculptor to use a bandsaw to cut the stone. The stone will absorb a large portion of the heat generated by friction. This keeps the steel of the saw teeth from burning. The teeth of the saw blade will still wear.

I use a "skip tooth" saw blade. This blade has half the teeth of a regular blade. This allows more stone dust to be carried the depth of the stone while you are cutting it.

I make great use of a "Stanley", ("mini hack") hacksaw. This tool holds a hacksaw blade by one end, allowing the front of the hacksaw blade access to very confined areas, such as a drill hole. It is even more effective if you grind or break of the front end of the hacksaw blade. This will give you a cutting edge to the very front of the blade.



The saw is used to remove large chunks of stone in order reshape the block of stone in order to better help you visualize the final carving. Try to keep in mind the symmetry of the carving as you cut.

You may have areas that contain a lot of stone that you wish to remove in the middle of the piece. This can be done by a technique that I call "pointing". The masters of old would make a model of a sculpture that they intended to carve, this form could replicated in stone by drilling hundreds of

holes into the marble. These holes will weaken the stone so it can be easily removed with the mallet and chisel.

For the bighorn sheep carving I needed to remove the stone between the front and back legs. The holes are drilled half the depth of the stone. I gauge this by marking the drill with a marking pen to the depth I desire to drill. By keeping the holes close together, the stone should only break to the drilled line.

When using the chisel, limit the amount of stone you wish to remove at one time. There is a grain to the stone and you could split the stone in two if you are not careful. Remove the broken stone often to give you a better view of the area you are working in. Listen to the stone as you chisel, there will be a distinct difference in the sound of the mallet hitting the chisel when you are forcing the stone. Change the position of the chisel before the stone splits.

If you assume the rasp, file or knife is an extension of your arm, you will you find that you have a greater control to remove the stone quicker and more effectively. Hold the tool as if you were pointing it. The power should come from the upper arm and shoulder. Use the wrist only to position the tool.

Remember the rasp will cut the maximum amount of stone during the forward motion. You will also have more control of the cut if you concentrate on the stone you wish to remove.

As the stone is removed, the piece will began to take shape in your mind. Try to visualize the finished piece as you progress. This will give you a better idea of the form that you are attempting to create.

I usually will draw a centre or spine line on the carving to help me keep the symmetry of the carving as I work. Try to maintain a balance as you carve, it is very difficult to replicate the other side of the carving if you only carve one side at a time.

Simple Basic Tools

A simple carving can be made with the simplest of tools.
By wrapping Duct tape around one end of a hacksaw blade, you can create a simple cutting tool for sawing your stone into a basic shape.
A small round single cut rattail file can be used as a knife by holding the file at a 45° angle and pushing with the upper arm.

Remember; the Native Americans were able to carve intricate pipes and bowls out of soapstone using sharp pieces of flint and polishing with sand.