

# Split Stones & Underworld

By

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## Abstract

This article explores split stones altered by Native Americans in some way that have been found at Ceremonial Stone Landscape (CSL) sites and their proposed purpose as a spirit portal. Altered split stones include split stone cairns, split stones attached to niches and enclosures, utilized as enclosures, associated with solar alignments, and associated with serpent effigies. Split stone spirit portals are most often associated with the Underworld but sometimes with spirits living within the rock. Underworld and the spirits associated with it were as diverse as the split stone structures as seen in the historical accounts. Diversity was found to be prevalent and useful in analyzing and reading these structures that are common at CSL sites throughout the Northeastern United States.

## Introduction

What is being explored in this article is the diverse use of the split stone as a ceremonial structure. Its usage ranges from the common split stone cairn found at many Ceremonial Stone Landscape (CSL) sites to its incorporation within complex structures and/or units of structures. In general a split in a stone that has been altered or integrated into a structure and/or unit shows it was utilized as a spirit portal. The spirit portal concept comes from numerous historical and anthropological accounts. The most common association is with the Underworld though some accounts tell of spirits living in the rocks. Those same accounts show a mix of spirits used the spirit portals such as the spirits of people alive and dead, Sun, Serpent, Guardian Spirit of Underworld, Little People, fish, animals like Moose and Blessed Manitou, the latter acquired from Christian beliefs. It was a complex belief system with one thing in common Underworld and Upperworld each had malevolent and benevolent spirits. For the First Americans<sup>1</sup> living in the southwest and Great Lakes Region the Underworld was their place of origin.<sup>2</sup> It was a vastly different belief than what the Christians brought to America.

Split stones documented by the author and her research partner, son James Gage, show diversity and at the same time a single common belief. The common belief is a split in a stone is a spirit portal. Diversity shows up in how the spirit portal was utilized. Was it attached to a niche? Was it integrated into an enclosure? Was the split stone cairn created in the head of a spring? Or in a seasonal runoff stream? Was

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<sup>1</sup> In 2021 a new museum was opened in Oklahoma originally named the American Indian Cultural Center. Prior to opening its name was changed to the First Americans Museum. The 2021 Plymouth Thanksgiving parade celebrated the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary (a year late due to the Covid 19 epidemic) of the first American Thanksgiving. Since the United States is made up of immigrants the organizers of the parade invited descendants of people who migrated to America from across the world. Over 90 nations were represented in person or via their country's flag. Yet there was one group without a flag instead they carried a banner with "First Americans". These First Americans currently known as American Indians came from tribes across North America.

The term "First Americans" reflects the fact their forefathers were immigrants. The newest archaeological evidence places these first Americans as arriving 10,000 or more years before the last ice age and the Bering Strait migration route opening up. Their migration story is still to be discovered.

<sup>2</sup> Menomini of the Great Lakes Region - Skinner 1921, 46; Pueblo of the Southwest - Buckland 1896, p 364 [Buckland cites Mendelevff on "Kiva Building," in *Smithsonian Annual Report*, 1886-7, p. 117, *et seq.*]

it used as the main focus of the ceremony? Was it used with a solar alignment? Association is a key element in reading split stone features. To do so, requires documentation, often full / complete documentation of a site. The examples presented in this article were all part of fully documented sites with the exception of two (that were noted).

Most of the examples showcased are one-of-a-kind. This is primarily due to the various types of uses. It also reflects the creative individualness of the First Americans. The range of examples includes all the known types of usage to the author. There are likely more uses to be discovered. The structures are presented as a guide to what to look for in the field. Do not expect to find exact matches. Do expect to find basic similarities.

## **What is a Ceremonial Split Stone Structure?**

- A stone structure incorporating a split stone.
- The most common is the split stone cairn with stone inside the split and/or on top of the split boulder.
- A split boulder with or without stone(s) in the split integrated into a ceremonial stone structure unit.
- An enclosure utilizing a split boulder – built-in.
- A niche attached to a split boulder with or without stones in the split.
- An effigy on top of a split stone cairn.
- An effigy utilizing a split stone within it.<sup>3</sup>
- A Manitou stone linked to a split stone cairn.
- An alignment associated with a split stone feature.

Split stones are numerous and common throughout the northeastern United States. For a split stone to be considered a ceremonial structure it must have been altered by placing stone inside the split, on top of the split boulder, have been utilized for an enclosure, attached to an enclosure or niche, associated with an alignment, be part of a unit of stone structures, or associated with a story. Through alterations and associated events the split in the stone was either known as or converted to an active spirit portal. Those split stones associated with a spirit based event had offerings made to them mostly in the form of tobacco but occasionally physical objects. Altered split stones often had stones added, some as offerings and some to simply activate the spirit portal. Split stones without an associated ceremonial feature in a ceremonial landscape may also have been utilized as spirit portals but there is no way to test them or prove they were utilized for a ceremonial purpose. Therefore they are not part of this study.

### ***Manitou Stone & Split Stone Cairn***

Location: Ashburnham, Massachusetts

Structure: Split stone cairn with a line of stones extending out from it over to a two foot high stone slab with the shape of a Manitou stone in an upright position.

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<sup>3</sup> This is only example not discussed in the article. It is a serpent effigy with an integrated split feature For more information please see Gage 2019, page 92, Feature 13-K.



Interpretation:

- (1) Manitou stone represents a spirit. It has a specific shape: a neck, sloping shoulders and torso.
- (2) Split in stone is a portal to the underground (i.e. Underworld)
- (3) Portal allows a spirit to exit or enter
- (4) Line of stones between Manitou stone and split create a path of travel between the two features

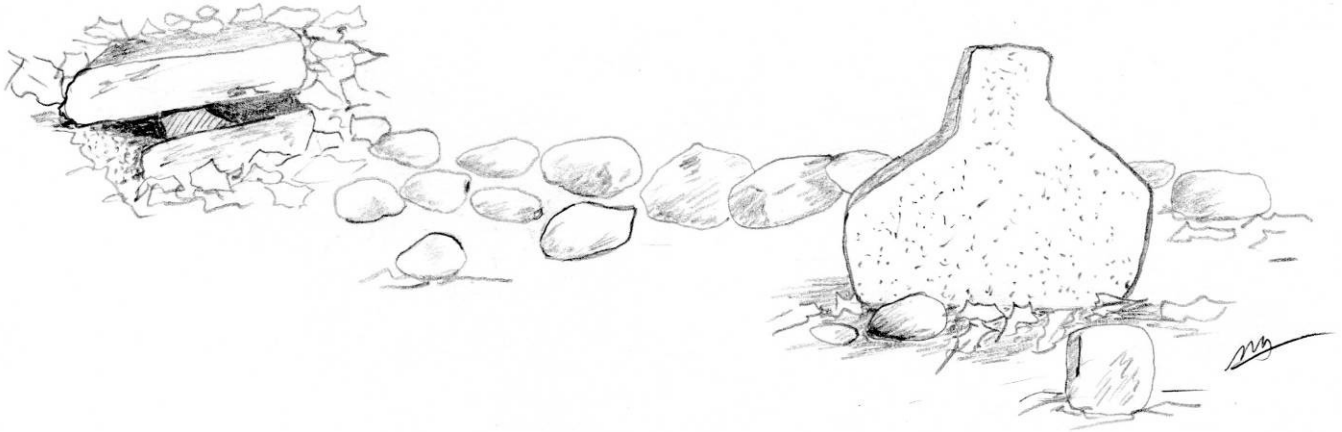


Figure 1 – Illustration of Manitou stone and split stone cairn linked by line of stones (Ashburnham, MA)



Figure 2 – Manitou stone has a specific shape: a neck, sloping shoulders and torso.





Figure 3 – Split stone cairn with a single stone wedged into the split.

Are there anthropological accounts to validate the interpretation?

## Historical & Anthropological Accounts

Under this section firsthand accounts are presented revealing First American's belief's regarding Manitou stones, split stones and Underworld. They were used as a means to understand and interpret the split stone structures. The accounts present evidence of a belief in Manitou(s) and their physical representations. Underworld was another matter. Within today's First Americans cultures Underworld is similar to the Christian's belief, a place of doom and malevolent spirits. However, going back a mere hundred years a different view presented itself: Upperworld and Underworld both had a mix of benevolent (good) as well as malevolent (bad) spirits. Both spirit worlds were considered similar to each other but at the same time opposites. For example, when it was summer in one world it was winter in the other. Splits and chasms (large splits) were the entrances or portals to the Underworld. Spirits traveled from one place to another, Sun Spirit went into Underworld. Offerings were made to spirits in Underworld. This is a view that is largely ignored today but highly important to the stone structures built during the period when it was a cultural norm.

### Manitou Stones

According to Roger Williams who wrote *A Key into the Language of America or Language of the Natives* (1643) the term "*Manittoo*" was applied to any man, woman, bird, beast, fish, etc. that excelled, referring to it as a God.<sup>4</sup> The First Americans gave Williams the names of thirty seven gods.<sup>5</sup> According to Rev. Ezra Stiles these Gods were present in the stone and wooden objects representing them. Two examples, historically documented are presented.

"Aged Deacon Avery of Groton Pockatunnek tells me that the Mohegan Indians once had Idols: that in the Great Reforma[tion] of 1741 as he called it those Indians bro[ugh]t in & gave up to the English a number of stone & wooden Idols; & have had & worshipped none since."<sup>6</sup>

This quote confirms the presence and use of "stone & wooden Idols" (Manitou stones and their counterparts wooden Manitous) by the First Americans in southeastern New England.

"A statue of the god *Wa'bano*, the Morning Star ... This figure, once the property of the late father of Kime'wûn Oke'mas, who was a noted shaman of the *Wa'bano* cult, is crudely hewn from a log in nearly life-size, and presents the head and armless trunk of the deity."<sup>7</sup> Menomoni of Wisconsin.

"Such [Manitou] stones were once located in the vicinity of many Indian villages and also along trails and canoe routes. All were supposed to be the habitations of powerful spirits, and played an important part in the religious customs of the Indian tribes of Northern United States and Canada."<sup>8</sup>

The Wisconsin example's description "the head and armless trunk of the deity" is the closest fit to the Manitou stone with a neck, sloping shoulders and torso found in Massachusetts.

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<sup>4</sup> Williams 1643, 126.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 124.

<sup>6</sup> Stiles 1901, v.3 p.508.

<sup>7</sup> Skinner 1921, 330-332.

<sup>8</sup> Brown, 1908, 168.

Why did the First Americans have Manitou stones? Mary Suggedub, a fifty year old Ojibiwa woman told Diamond Jenness, a noted anthropologist, about the role of Manitous in her culture. “The present-day [1935] Parry Islanders describe their early religion before the coming of the whites as *menidokewin*, ‘*manido* rule or rule by super-natural spirits’ ‘Just as Christians approach God for favours through his ministers or churches, so the Indian approached the servants of the Great Spirit, the *manidos*, and sought their aid’ (Mary Suggedub)”<sup>9</sup>

## **Underworld**

### First American’s View of Underworld

The First American’s view of the Underworld is vastly different than the Euro-American’s view. First Americans believed both Upperworld and Underworld were similar to each other but at the same time opposites. This first example comes from the Cherokee. “There is another world under this, and it is like ours in everything—animals, plants, and people—save that the seasons are different. We know that the seasons in the underworld are different from ours, because the water in the springs [places where water comes out of the ground naturally] is always warmer in winter and cooler in summer than the outer air.”<sup>10</sup> Another example comes from Jonas King, an Ojibwa who noted one winter a moose carried two boys off to the underground world where there was no snow.<sup>11</sup>

In the southwest the Hopi expressed the following, “Each morning at sunrise the sun emerges from his sun-house in the east, travels a circular path above the surface of the earth, and descends into his sun-house in the west at sunset. During the night the sun completes his circular journey, traveling west to east through the underworld. Day and night are thus reversed in the upper and lower worlds the sun rising in the lower world as it sets in the upper world and setting in the lower as it rises again in the upper world.”

“This same diurnal reversal takes place during the annual shifts of the seasons. ... So again conditions are reversed in the underworld, which experiences winter while the surface world enjoys summer, and summer during the winter period above.”<sup>12</sup>

Three tribes Cherokee, Ojibwa and Hopi from different geographical regions of North America each held the same belief: Upperworld and Underworld were alike. For the Cherokee, “There is another world under this, and it is like ours in everything—animals, plants, and people ...” This is reflected in the Ojibwa’s belief of Underworld being the winter home of the moose. To them the two worlds were the reverse of each other in regards to winter and summer, and day and night. Though there are no documented accounts about the Underworld in New England the common belief these other North American tribes held can be extrapolated and applied to the stone structures.

### Split in Stone = Portal

The following examples show splits in stones were associated with spirits, spirit portals and the Underworld.

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<sup>9</sup> Jenness 1935, 47.

<sup>10</sup> Mooney 1900, 240.

<sup>11</sup> Jenness 1935, 24.

<sup>12</sup> Waters 1963, 189-190.

### *Connecticut- Story of Peter Sky*

William Simmons, Professor of Anthropology collected stories about First Americans' spiritual beliefs in New England. He wrote, "Jim Harris, a Scaticook from Litchfield County, Connecticut, told this story [below] to Speck. The Scaticook population, although mainly composed of Hudson River Machican, also included people of Mohegan and Pequot ancestry."<sup>13</sup>

"[1903] This is the story of Peter Sky. They said that he lived north of here. He used to go by a swamp that lay near a road. One dark night he and some one else went to town and got some whisky. Then they came down that road until they reached the swamp. They took their whisky down there and began to drink when they had found a nice place to sit on. Soon they fell to quarreling over their whisky, and in the fight that followed Pete was killed. The other Indian got away was never heard of again. But the next day some people coming by found Pete's body there and a rock with a hole in it close by. That rock was never noticed much by the Indians thereafter until one dark and foggy night, when some of them went down to the swamp on their way home to drink something they had bought. *They heard noises from the rock, and one of them poured some of the goods into the hole.* Immediately there was a voice from the rock. It called for more, and they kept on pouring whisky in until the voice was the voice of a drunken man. That rock will 'holler' now on foggy nights if you pour whisky into it."<sup>14</sup> (emphasis added)

In this story, an offering of whiskey was poured into a hole (opening) in a rock for the spirit of a deceased person.

### *Eaglesmere, a lake in the mountains of Pennsylvania*

"Of course Eaglesmere has its legend. It is said once there was no lake here, but only a great chasm. In the chasm was an entrance to the underworld, ..."<sup>15</sup>

### *Great Lakes Canadian Shield – Ojibwa*

(Vision of Ogauns) "Some moons later I left my parents again, carrying this time a complete travelling equipment, even a small birch-bark canoe. I found the chasm securely blocked, and stared aghast at the huge, irregular granite masses in front of me, charred and discoloured where they had been shattered. 'All hope is gone then,' I murmured; 'Never shall I obtain the everlasting life'; and I covered my face with my hands. But while my face was thus covered the pathway stood revealed to me, and, looking up, I searched for the mouth of the chasm by which I must enter [Underworld]."<sup>16</sup>

### *Ludlow Cave (Black Hills – North Dakota)*

"Its walls were covered with rock art and its floor blanketed with offerings when non-Indians first described it in 1874. ... it was used for at least 2,000 years. It contained artifacts from the Mandans, Hidatsas, Cheyennes, Lakotas, and probably Crows. The Mandans and Hidatsas viewed the narrow crevice extending back from the main cave some 400 feet as a passageway to the underworld."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Simmons 1986, 124 citing Speck 1909, 205.

<sup>14</sup> Simmons 1986, 124-125 citing Speck 1928, 278.

<sup>15</sup> Farris 1919, 180.

<sup>16</sup> Jenness 1935, 57.

<sup>17</sup> Sundstrom 2004, 132.

From Connecticut to North Dakota and up into the Great Lakes Canadian Shield region splits in stones were viewed as portals. The Connecticut story is from the historic period whereas Ludlow cave in North Dakota had evidence of pre-contact use going back two millenniums that continued into the 1800s. The portal was a means to make contact with spirits in the Underworld or in the Connecticut case with a dead person's spirit living within a split stone.

### Offerings to Spirits

In Connecticut whiskey was the offering.<sup>18</sup> In Ludlow cave there were offerings of "rock art" and "unused tools, feathers, arrows, and jewelry."<sup>19</sup> Stone although not recorded in association with split stone spirit portals was used throughout the northeast as an offering in trailside cairns like the Great Barrington / Stockbridge cairn.<sup>20</sup> Stone was also used as an offering up in the arctic tundra as documented by Hearne on his expedition in 1770.<sup>21</sup>

### Spirits & Travel in Underworld

Spirits are living entities with the ability to travel as seen in the quotes below.

Ogauns, an Ojibwa Indian, recounted a vision in which he traveled into and through the Underworld. According to Ogauns, he was joined by "my friend, one of the suns in our sky who had come to join my expedition ...". Further along in their journey he recalled, "I bethought me of our old traditions, that evil *manidos* dwell within the bowels of the earth; and I hesitated to continue. .... My companion [the sun] attacked it while I tugged desperately at the arrows in its mate; but by the time I had recovered them our enemy, half serpent, was dead. We burned both their corpses, and traveled along the luminous road, looking for some resting place. Then we heard a voice saying 'It is not safe for you to rest below beside the road. Come up with me.' We climbed up, and found a very old man, who called us his grandchildren. We rested there with our grandfather, who instructed us on all the dangers that lay ahead of us at certain points ...". At the end of his spiritual journey, Ogauns states "The child then led us on to where human beings dwelt in happiness. My companion and the child waited behind while I pressed forward to the place where I should meet the blessed [sacred] *manido*."<sup>22</sup>

In this example during a vision quest Christian beliefs were intertwined with First Americans beliefs revealing the complexity of what it was for a First American to experience a journey through the Underworld. It shows Upperworld spirits like the benevolent Sun Spirit went into Underworld. It shows the common belief of a malevolent serpent spirit as well as benevolent spirits dwelling in Underworld. It shows travel took place. These are the key elements found in the split stone spirit portals within Ceremonial Stone Landscapes.

Another example is presented in which a spirit travels from place to place. "The squatting figure that was painted from the shore below is surely a Maymaygwayshi; the more so as Lake Nipigon Indians informed me of the old belief in an underground channel that led from underneath this figure directly through to Lake Nipigon. This accounted for the Maymaygwayshi being seen up in Gull Bay with huge trout freshly caught in Lake Superior."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Simmons 1986, 124-125.

<sup>19</sup> Sundstrom 2004, 132.

<sup>20</sup> Butler 1946, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Mowat 1973, 51.

<sup>22</sup> Jenness 1935, 57-59.

<sup>23</sup> Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 76.

The above account shows spirits used conduits like the “underground channel” to travel from one place to another. The underground channel correlates to the line of stones between the Manitou stone and split stone cairn in the example presented on page 3.

### Discussion

At the start the question was raised, are there anthropological accounts to validate the interpretation of the Manitou stone, line of stones and split stone? The interpretation stated a spirit traveled between the split stone spirit portal to the Underworld and the standing stone, a Manitou stone. First American accounts confirmed Manitou stones existed and were used for ceremonial/ritual/sacred (religious) purposes. Spirits used conduits such as under water channels to travel which can be extrapolated to a line of stones. Splits in stones are spirit portals to the Underworld. This last belief was recorded across North America. So the answer to the question is yes, there are anthropological accounts that validate the interpretation. The dilemma is there are no exact matches and therefore the research works with the base concepts and common beliefs.

## Stone Structures

This section deals with stone structures lacking oral and/or written historical/anthropological accounts. Today the structures are found on old abandoned farms, old wood lots, and reforested land. Some like the Freetown CSL in Massachusetts predate the contact period whereas others like the Manitou Hassannash Preserve CSL in Rhode Island have evidence of being used in the 1800s.<sup>24</sup> A few people called the Keepers of the Secrets have knowledge of some of the sites but will not share it even with their own people. In the interim knowledge of the stone structures has been lost among the First Americans. This seems unfair for without knowledge the ceremonies and their spirits go by the wayside.

To recover a small portion of the lost knowledge, information gathered from written accounts was applied to the stone structures more specifically split stone cairns and their associated niches, Manitou stones, standing stones, alignment stones, enclosures, serpents, water and travel. Where necessary additional historical and anthropological accounts have been inserted. The research delves into a deep level of understanding versus the simplistic understanding in place today albeit it only touches upon the actual ceremonies that took place. It cannot recover the songs and prayers but it can recover basic knowledge.

### Split Stone Cairn

This is the most common type of split stone structure found throughout the northeastern United States. Split stone cairns are identified by having one or more stones placed inside the split(s) or on top of a split stone. Some have large quantities of small stones in the split. Others have a single stone wedged into the split. These split stone cairns are always part of a group of cairns. The following are a few examples of split stone cairns found throughout New England. They are representative of the diversity of the split stone cairn. More examples will be presented with cairns associated with other types of structures.

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<sup>24</sup> Gage & Gage 2020; Gage & Gage 2021.



### *Single Stone Wedged in Split*

Location: East Central New Hampshire

The split stone is flush with the ground and has a single stone wedged into the top of the split. The cairn is part of a large CSL site containing small to extra large cairns with diverse designs.



Figure 4 – Single stone wedged into a split (East Central, NH)



### *Single Stone Wedged in Split*

Location: Sturbridge, Massachusetts

This is another example of a single stone wedged into the top of the split. The cairn is part of a CSL cairn site integrated into an 1800s farm.



Figure 5 – Single stone wedged into a split (Sturbridge, MA)



### ***Stones in Split and on Top of Boulder***

Location: Manitou Hassanash Preserve, Hopkinton, Rhode Island

In this split stone cairn medium-large stones were used to fill the split. The same medium-large stones extend from the split out over the top of the boulder. It is one of over eight hundred cairns in an old pasture on the farm of Lawton Foster, the younger. The cairn is part of a complex CSL site with a serpent shaped enclosure, serpent effigy with a historically quarried stone with plug n' feather marks for its head, niches, symbolically shaped stones, and cairns ranging from one stone up to thousands of stones. Some of the multi-stone cairns have low mounds made up of extra small stones 1" to 3" long. The pasture is strewn with boulders and has never been plowed. The site was written up in the book *Land of a Thousand Cairns* (2020).



Figure 6 – Stones in Split and on Top of Boulder (Hopkinton, RI)  
Photo courtesy of Steve DiMarzo Jr. who did the field documentation of the site.



### *Split Stone Cairn with a Stone Sandwich*

Location: Sturbridge, Massachusetts

The cairn was built in a 6' high glacial boulder with a 1 ½' wide split. The stones are medium-large in the split. Near the top of the split are two horizontally placed stone slabs. In between the slabs are thin stones forming a stone "sandwich". The stone sandwich closes the top of the split. The cairn is part of a CSL site integrated into the same 1800s farm as the split wedge cairn in Sturbridge, MA.



Figure 7 – Overall view of this large split stone cairn (Sturbridge, MA)  
Arrow indicates vertical split filled with stones.





Figure 8 – Close-up view of stones placed in the split

## Discussion

Split stone cairns no matter what the design are interpreted as spirit portals to the Underworld and associated with a spirit. That was confirmed through the anthropological accounts under *Split in Stone = Portal* section (page 6).

## Niche and Split Stone

Some split stones have a niche attached. The first example is an unusual man-made split with a small cairn on top the boulder and a separate niche attached. The second example has a potential niche integrated into a stone mound attached to the split stone with stones in the split. The third example is a niche attached to a split stone without stones in the split. It is associated with an alignment.

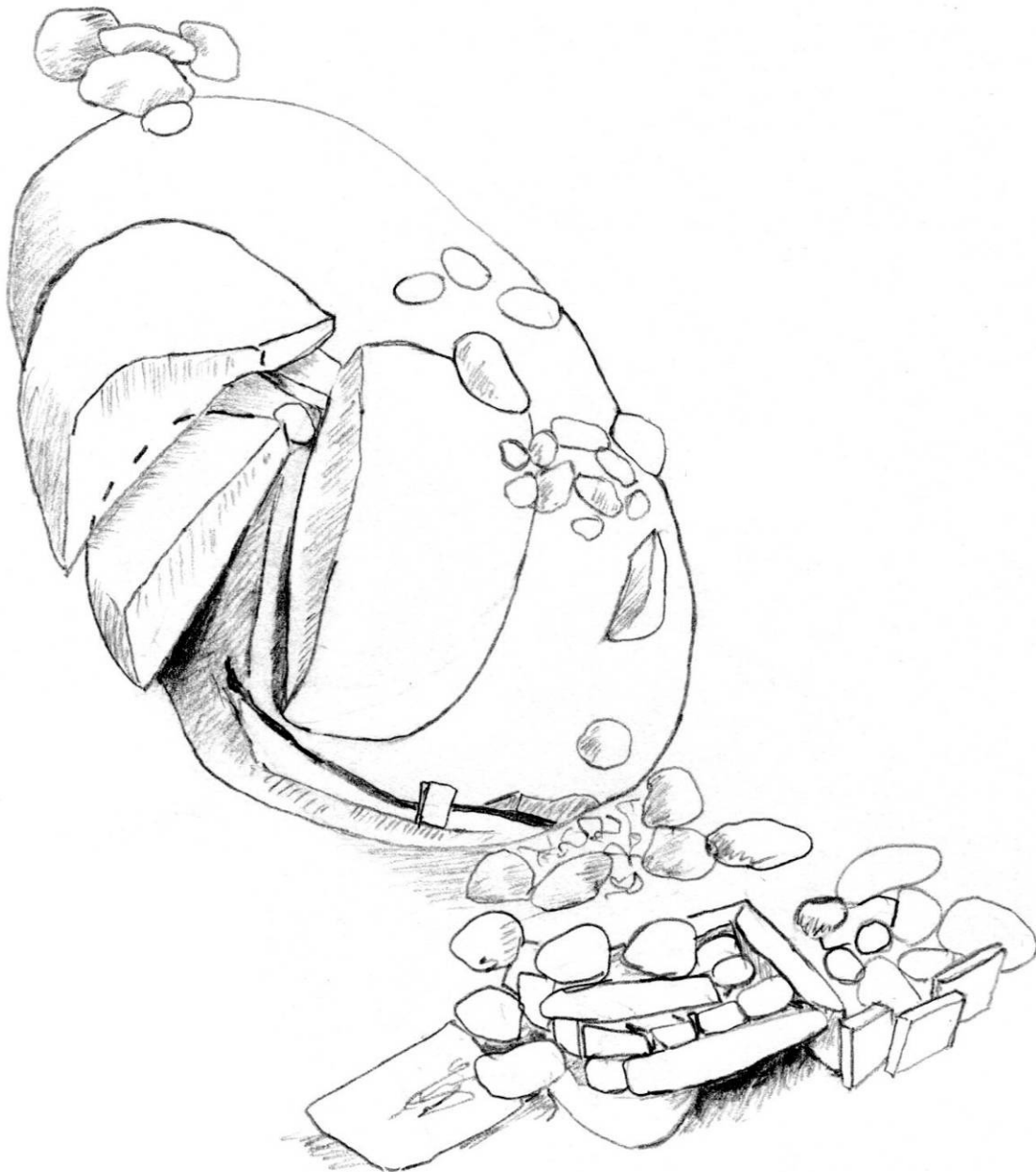


Figure 9 – Niche attached to split stone cairn (example #1). Technical drawing showing details of the structure's construction and features. Based upon photographs and field notes.

## ***Example #1 - Niche Attached to Split Stone Cairn***

Location: Central New Hampshire

Boulder: 2'9" H x 6' W x 9'8" L

Splits: Low on one side is a large shallow depression in the boulder. It was used to create a man-made split. A large flat stone was placed over half of the depression so that its bottom was raised off the base boulder creating an opening deep inside. (Figs. 12 & 13) The same slab in conjunction with the opposite upper side of the depression created an upside down V shape with a single stone placed at the top. On top of the bottom slab was placed an extra large flat slab with a straight front edge and rounded (half-circular) opposite side. The front straight edge has a six inch high flat surface with a crescent shape. Directly across from the flat edge is a second extra large flat slab with a straight flat edge facing its counterpart. Together they form a large upside down V shape. (Figs. 9 & 12). They are not a matching pair but were set up to appear as so. The arrangement of the two upside down V's and the split create a triple layered split feature. (Fig. 12) Emanating out of the split on the base boulder is a narrow horizontal split/groove along the side of the boulder leading to the niche. (Figs. 10 & 14) Near the end closest to the niche is a small flat square stone that covers the groove. The split/groove was unable to be determined if the feature which started out as a horizontal split remained a split or turned into a small groove. The split/groove was identified as a route of travel to guide the spirit called forth from the Underworld spirit portal over to the niche. The stone covering the groove is also a feature but its purpose is unknown.

There is a potential explanation for the triple layered "V" split. Ogauns an Ojibwa, who revealed his vision provides insight into such a concept. "He [Almighty Manido of Upperworld] said that, I might have my wish [vision] but bade me first descend to the three layers of the underworld."<sup>25</sup>

Cairn on top boulder: You'll note there is a cobble stone on top of the extra large slab B (see fig. 12). It is part of a single layer of stones cairn on top of the boulder (fig.17), note one stone is separated by it self (next to scale card in fig.16).

Cairn attached to boulder: A second small cairn is attached to the opposite end from the niche. Five stones show through the duff. It was not fully cleaned. (Fig.18) No stones were found on the side of the boulder opposite the split.

Niche (Figs. 11 & 19 & 20 & 21)

*Exterior:* 2'6" H x 4'3" W x 12' L

*Interior:* 12" H x 14" W x 22" Deep

*Gap between boulder & niche:* 18" wide the gap contained loose stones indicating the niche was originally attached to the end of the boulder

*Damage:* One side of the niche was pulled apart. The damage appears to be from a bear. One of the stone slabs was pulled off along with several cobble stones in what appears to be one fell swoop. (Fig. 21) The other side and interior are intact.

*Construction:* A single large slab was used for the roof, it spans an in-ground boulder and a stone on the opposite side. The back wall is made up of several cobble stones. On top is a layer of cobble like stones and then a layer with two side by side slabs. One of the slabs was pulled out. Atop the slabs was another layer of cobble like stones. Leaned against the front right side (when facing the niche straight on) are three short upright slabs in a row. In the figure 11 one is fully upright, the next two are tilted forward.

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<sup>25</sup> Jenness 1935, 57.



On close inspection the two tilted slabs appear to have originally been fully upright. The three slabs appear to correlate with the three splits. The meaning of the repeated “three” is unknown.

The niche & split stone cairn are located within a group of small on ground cairns that are spaced out. The number of cairns and their designs were not documented. This group of ceremonial structures was one of three in the same area of conservation land. Each was spaced out from the other with distinct gaps between the groups.

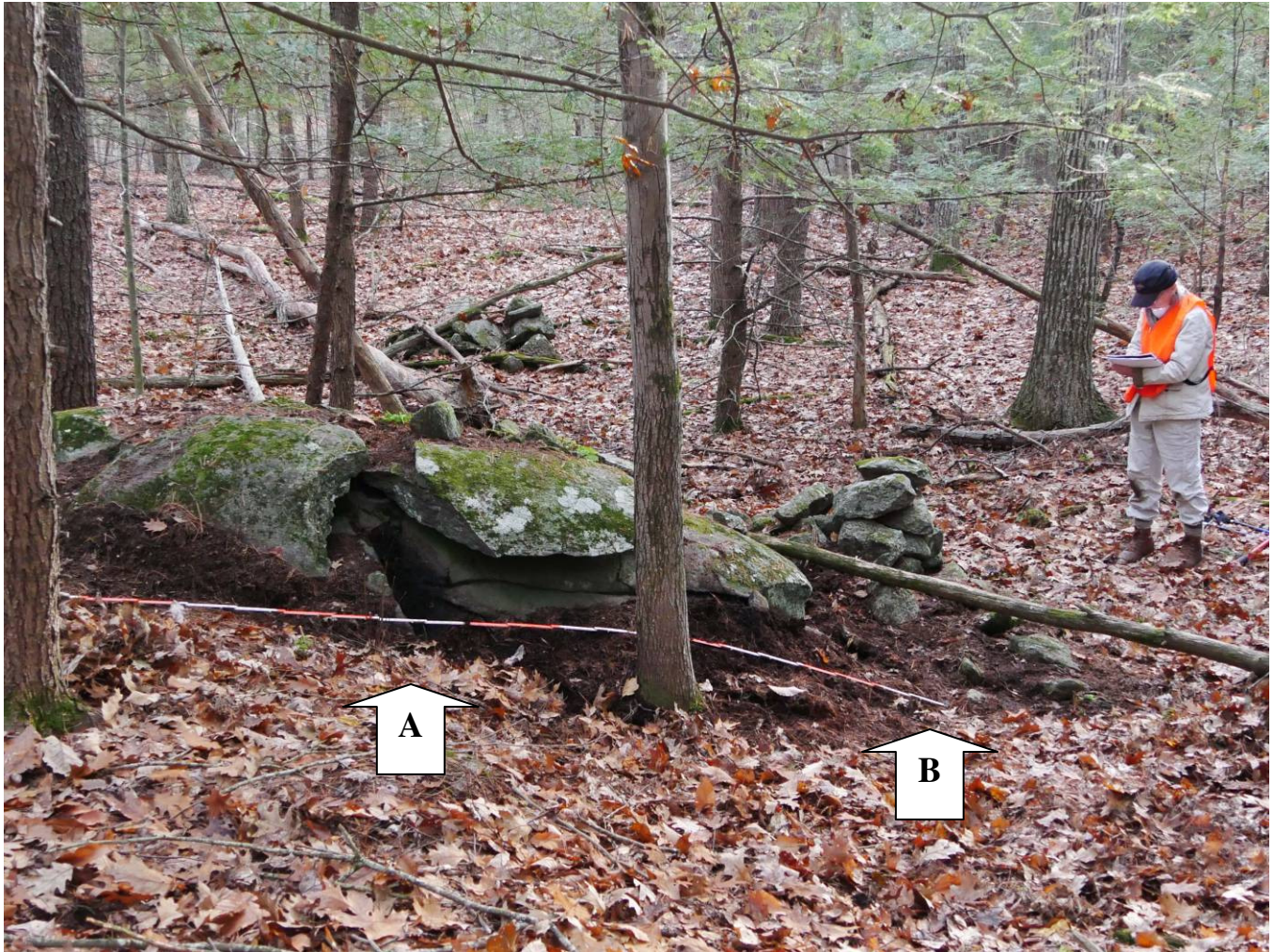


Figure 10 – Overall view (a) split boulder (b) niche



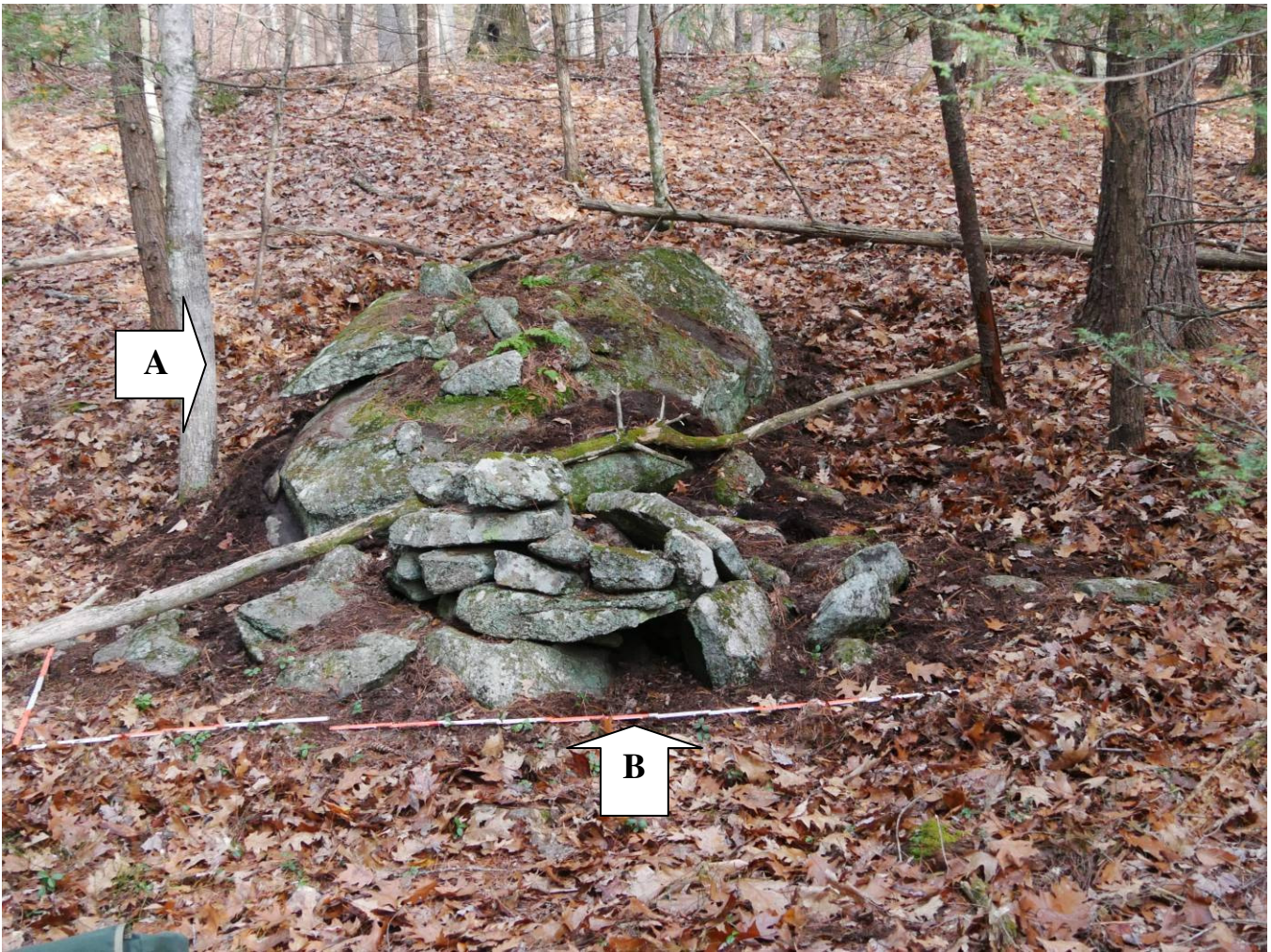


Figure 11 – Overall view (a) split boulder (b) niche





Figure 12 – (A) Upper slab (left) with crescent shaped edge. (B) Upper slab (right) with straight edge. Together their front edges form a “V” shaped feature. (C) Lower slab creates a “V” shaped feature by incorporating a depression in the base stone. In addition, it was set up so that it left a dark, deep crevice underneath indicated by arrow. The layout created a triple layered spirit portal: upper level “V” spirit portal with stones A & B, middle layered “V” spirit portal with stone A and base stone, and inner level spirit portal underneath stone A shown in figure 13.



Figure 13 – Close-up of the opening (spirit portal feature)





Figure 14 – A narrow horizontal split/groove along the side of the boulder leading to the niche.



Figure 15 – Small flat stone intentionally placed over the horizontal split.





Figure 16 – Cairn on top of boulder



Figure 17 – Close-up of cairn on top of boulder



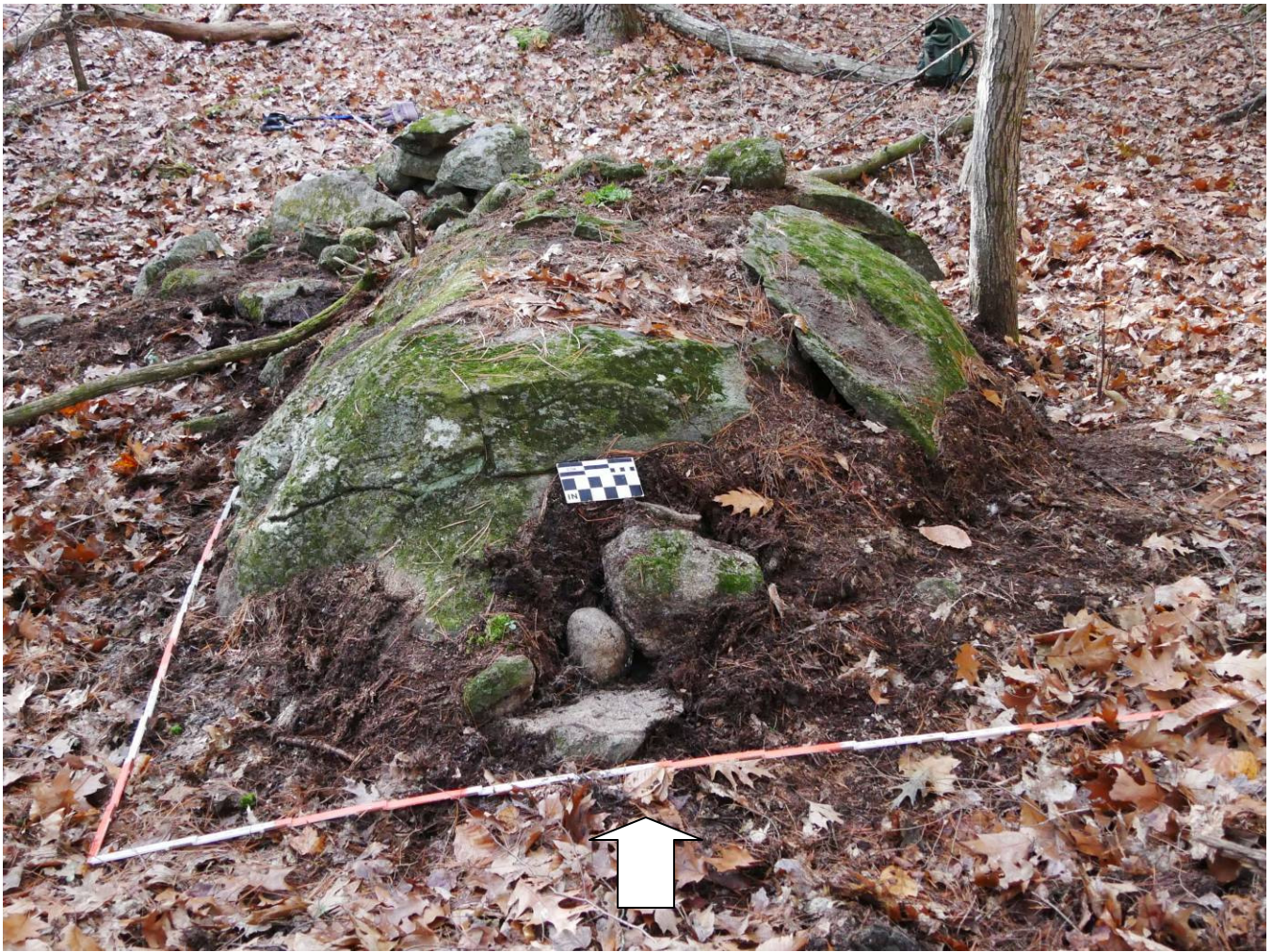


Figure 18 – Cairn attached to the boulder on the opposite end from the niche attached to the boulder.





Figure 19 – Overall view of the niche



Figure 20 – Close-up of the niche showing the interior





Figure 21 – A portion of the niche was damaged possibly by a bear. The elongated slab in the middle was pulled out of position.



***Example #2 - Multiple Stones in Split with Niche Attached***

Location: Gloucester, Massachusetts

The split stone is four & five feet high with a one foot wide split through the middle of the boulder. Medium and small sized stones were placed inside the split up to approximately the  $\frac{1}{4}$  mark and go approximately half ways into the split. The opposite end of the split has only a couple of stones inside with a few stones on the ground outside. The stones continue in a low mound in front of the split and on one side. Attached to the low mound in front is an extra large stone slab raised on one corner by a single support stone underneath it. There are other stones underneath the edge but none come in contact with the underside of the slab. This is thought to be a niche. The mound attached to the side has a large boulder embedded in it. The boulder was revealed by an illegal excavation into the attached mound showing it goes at least one foot plus deep below ground. Its actual depth below ground is unknown. There are hundreds of stones in this cairn. The cairn is part of a small CSL site at the far end of a small, poor 1700s to early 1800s historic village site called Dogtown.



Figure 22 – Front side overall view (A) Niche (B) Split (C) Attached stone mound





Figure 23 – (A) Small stones (B) medium size stones inside split



Figure 24 – The opposite side of the split



Figure 25 – The opposite side of the split only contains a small number of stones





Figure 26 – Niche: Stone slab raised up upon a support stone (arrow)



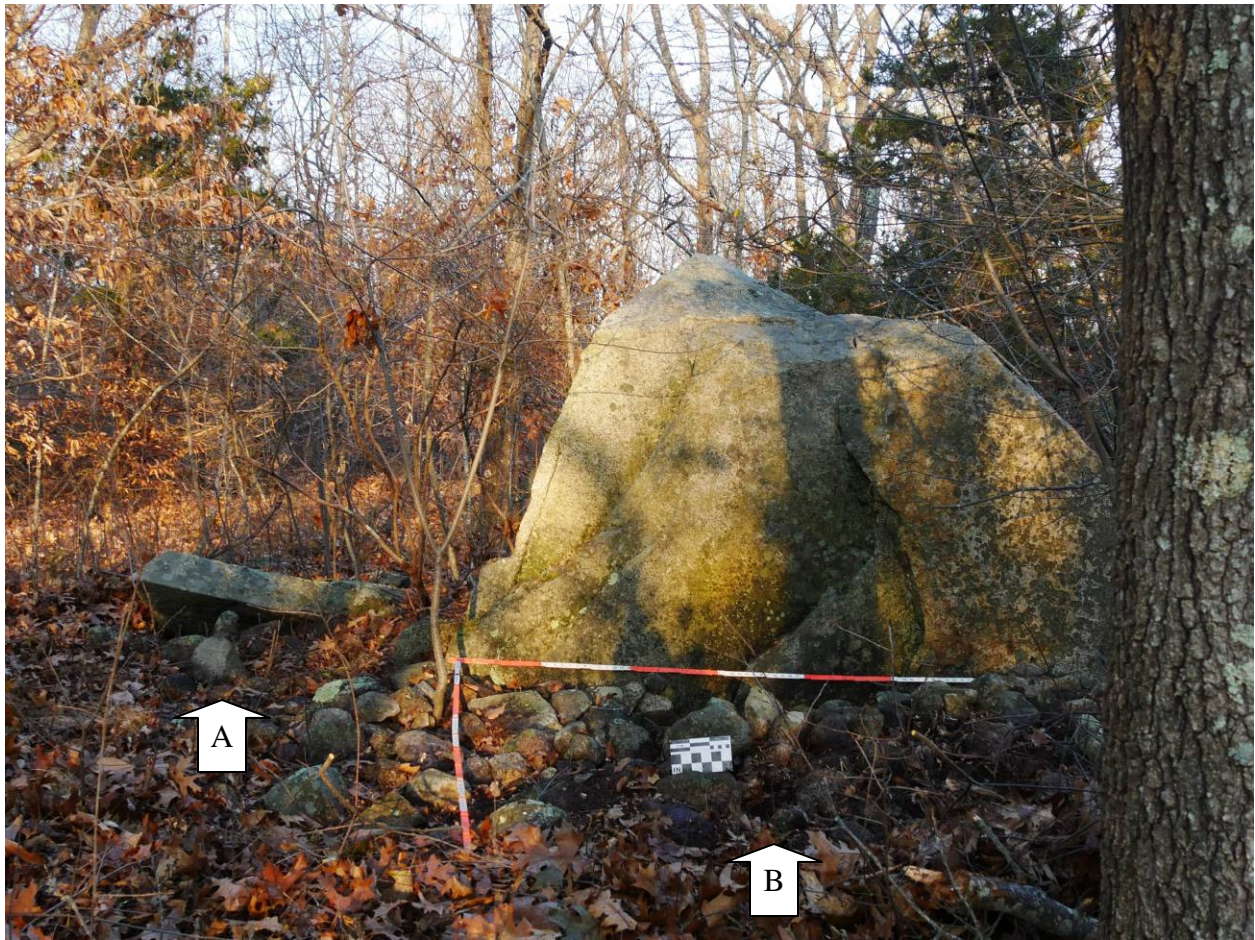


Figure 27 – Overall view of right side of the structure (A) Niche (B) Attached mound



Figure 28 - Small stones in the attached mound. This mound is NOT the result of any sort of agricultural field clearing activity, the stones are too small.





Figure 29 – Illegal excavation into the stone mound attached to the side of the split stone reveals the mound goes at least 12 inches into the ground. On the right side is a boulder embedded in the mound. Behind the scale card is wall like feature suggesting there was originally a box shaped depression in the mound. Also note the small stones (less than 4 inches in length) that make up part of the mound.



Figure 30 – Top down view, edge of split stone shows along the bottom edge of photo.





Figure 31 – These two photos were taken in 2010 prior to the structure being vandalized in 2011.



***Example #3 - Niche Attached to Split Stone***

Location: North Salem, New Hampshire – America’s Stonehenge Site

The split glacial boulder is well formed with a flat top, rectangular shape, and wide split. It is 3’ high by 6’ wide by 11’ 6” L with a 2’ wide split. Attached to the split boulder is a See-Through niche on its east side. Its interior size is 5” high by 1’8” wide by 1’8” long.



Figure 32 – Split glacial boulder with a see-through niche (fig.33) attached to right rear side of the boulder. Note there are no stones inside the split. In recent years visitors have put stones inside illegally.



Figure 33 – See-through niche attached to backside of the split boulder. Roof of niche is held upright by a stone on right side creating an open space under the roof stone.

This two part split stone structure was integrated into a stone wall containing the equinox sunrise alignment. The alignment and split stone structure are in close proximity to each other. Other stone features also in close proximity indicate the split stone and niche were part of the equinox sunrise ceremonial unit. Thus it is being included with alignments and split stone spirit portals, and will be discussed under that section.

## **Interpretation**

Stone niches on cairn sites are a class of stone structures. The common feature is an interior cavity. None have been found to contain artifacts. That suggests they had a different purpose than to hold objects. The fact these niches were attached to split stones that are spirit portals suggest niches were likely used to place a perishable offering to call a spirit forth (out of) or to encourage a spirit to enter (go in) the Underworld. The accounts below back up these ideas.

### *Offerings at Niches*

Great Lakes - "In an alcove of the glaciated granite, against a glistening white reredos of encrusted lime, the little red markings appear like tiny icons. Passing Indians still [1960's] leave tobacco in the little niche that is shown below."<sup>26</sup> (Vermilion River site is just south of Carling Lake within the Great Lakes Canadian Shield) Although late in time it shows a perishable offering, tobacco being placed in a niche. The 1960s was twenty years before the CSL movement went public with the book *Manitou* indicating placing a perishable offering in a niche was an old custom.

American Southwest - "A [Hopi] plaza shrine of the second type is a simple uncovered stone box made of slabs of rock set on edge, generally with the east side open. Shrines of this kind are usually well supplied with prayer emblems of different sorts."<sup>27</sup>

The Hopi shrine contained a man-made stone box with an open top that functioned like the Great Lakes and New England ritual/ceremonial stone niches. The purpose of these niches was to make offerings to a spirit. The offerings ranged from physical items to perishable items.

### *Calling a Spirit Out of Underworld*

Lake Superior - "... Shingwauk went to Agawa to gather fresh power on a vision quest. He called forth *Michipeshu*, the guardian spirit of the underworld and minerals, especially copper."<sup>28</sup>

This account is crucial because it shows a spirit can be called out of the Underworld. It also refers to a "guardian spirit of the Underworld" that can be equated to a Master Spirit of Underworld. The above written accounts of offerings to spirits placed in niches along with a spirit called out of Underworld is basic data that can be used in the analysis of a niche attached to a split stone. The niche indicates an offering was made to a spirit, the split stone with or without stones in the split indicates a spirit was called out of or sent in to Underworld. By interweaving the data it allows the researcher to piece together or read a few of the ceremonial stone structures.

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<sup>26</sup> Dewdney & Kidd 1967, 67.

<sup>27</sup> Fewkes 1906, 360.

<sup>28</sup> Conway & Conway 1990, 74.



### Alignment & Split Stone Spirit Portal

The two best examples of alignments directly associated with split stones are found at the America's Stonehenge site in North Salem, New Hampshire. It is privately owned and open to the public with an entrance fee. However, before presenting these two examples another example is being presented a niche/alignment combined structure that emphasizes how a niche and alignment functions. It is being used to set the stage for the America's Stonehenge's two alignments.

### ***Alignment & Niche (without a split stone)***

A one-of-a-kind niche/alignment combined structure was documented in southeastern New Hampshire that reveals the niche's purpose. The niche is a see-through design built on the ground. It is oriented west – east. On top is a three-sided pyramid shaped standing stone over which the equinox sunset was viewed by the author. The niche's interior was paved with small stones. On the exterior (west side) lying flat on the ground is a flat triangular paving stone with its point oriented towards the equinox sunset. The triangular paving stone dictated the orientation of the alignment.



Figure 34 - Equinox Sunset March 22, 2009 (Viewed from east side looking west)





Figure 35 – West side of the niche showing triangle shaped stone plate embedded in ground which points due west to the equinox sunset.

The way the alignment/niche is set up indicates a perishable offering such as tobacco was placed inside the niche as an incentive to get the Sun Spirit to go inside. The niche's see-through design functioned as a physical guide to keep the spirit on its proper trajectory. The symbolic triangular paving stone was a blocking mechanism at the front (west side) to keep the spirit from going back through the niche and hence getting off course. The alignment stone was used by the spiritual leaders to see if the Sun Spirit actually followed its proper course. (See below *Use of an Alignment Stone*)

The niche/alignment was interpreted by the author as a structure used by First Americans for a ceremonial purpose: (1) viewing a solar alignment, (2) for people to assist Sun Spirit on its journey, (3) for people to follow a solar event to make sure the Sun Spirit stayed on its proper course, (4) to make an offering to a spirit. These ideas were partially derived and verified by practices recorded among the Hopi who continued to practice their traditional ceremonies openly into historic times. Through the Hopi is a glimpse of a First American cultural practice with similar aspects to what is seen in the niche/alignment stone structure.

### *Use of an Alignment Stone*

“The sun, at the approach of the summer solstice, is watched with care by the priest of the sun, who determines the time by noticing the light shining at sunrise through a depression in the mountains called ‘the gate of Zuni,’ across the gnomon or sun-post, which projects a few feet above the soil on the plain of Zuni, and then announces the time for the rain dances to begin.”<sup>29</sup>

The Zuni used a “sun-post” placed in the ground. The post equates to a standing stone with the same function to determine the exact day of a solstice or equinox.

### *People assist and guide the Sun Spirit on its journey*

“...the Star (Sun) chief’s twirling of a shield is intended to aid the sun in its journey from one solstice point to the other.”<sup>30</sup>

The rite was designed for the people to assist the sun in its travels.

### *People follow the solstice event to make sure the Sun Spirit stayed on its proper course*

“According to Hopi theory the sun is supposed to rise at exactly the same spot on the horizon for four successive days after it reaches either of its solstice points. For this reason the Village chief of Oraibi waits until the fifth day following the close of his Soyal ritual, and then accompanies the Sun Watcher (Horn chief) at daybreak to his lookout at the Buffalo shrine, in order to make sure that the sun has responded to the rites and has actually started on the journey to its summer home. When he is convinced that all is well, the Village chief entrusts the Sun Watcher’s job to the Gray Flute chief, whose duty it is to observe the sun’s path until the summer solstice is reached.”<sup>31</sup>

The chiefs check to see if the "sun has responded to the rites".

### *Offering made to Sun Spirit*

Anthropologist Mischa Titev wrote “The all-inclusive nature of the Soyal [Winter Solstice Ceremony] is most clearly expressed in the prodigious manufacture of prayer-offerings for practically everything that falls within the range of Hopi culture. Some of the *paho* and *nakwakwosi* are of a totemic nature, as when clansmen make them for their eponyms and *wuya* and hand them over to their clan heads to be deposited at appropriate shrines. On the other hand, every celebrant also makes a vast number of offerings for a whole miscellany of purposes.” Titev continues by quoting Dorsey and Voth’s research “They are placed in the houses, tied to the ladders to prevent accident, placed in the chicken houses ‘that the hens may lay eggs,’ into the beef and sheep corals, and tied to horses’ tails, dogs’, goats’ and sheeps’ necks, etc. ‘for increase’; tied to the peach trees as prayer for large crops, deposited in springs for an abundant water supply, and disposed of in many similar ways.”<sup>32</sup>

Offerings to spirits was a part of every aspect of the Hopi’s life.

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<sup>29</sup> Peet 1905, 288.

<sup>30</sup> Titev 1944, 145 citing Parsons 1936, 24.

<sup>31</sup> Titev 1944, 146.

<sup>32</sup> Titev 1944, 145 quoting Dorsey and Voth 1901, 57.



The above quotes relate to the niche/alignment combined structure. They show people assisting Sun Spirit, offerings being made to the spirit, and the use of a post or stone to view the alignment. The next quote relates to Sun Spirit traveling between Upperworld and Underworld which is seen in the America's Stonehenge examples that involve split stones.

### *Sun Spirit: Travel between Underworld and Upperworld*

“The ladder prayer stick is used in the Winter Solstice ceremony in a symbolic way, being in fact an offering to the sun, which is supposed to be weary at that time and in need of assistance in climbing from his home in the under-world to the sky.”<sup>33</sup>

During the ceremony Sun Spirit is said to travel from its winter home in the “under-world” to its summer home in the “sky” (i.e. Upperworld).

Interpreting the stone structure arrangements in New England coincides with the activities recorded in southwestern tribal solar related ceremonies. The basic concepts: activities involved a post to view a solar alignment equating to alignment stones, assistance to the spirit by the people through offerings of ladder sticks for it to climb between Underworld and Upperworld, and twirling a shield to point the way to insure the Sun Spirit stayed on its correct trajectory. These concepts align with New England's stone structures used for the same purpose. The southwestern tribal solar ceremonies continued long after New England's First Americans were forced to cease openly holding their ceremonies. They are our only written accounts. From them basic concepts can be gleaned. Those concepts show up in the stone structure arrangements.

### *Winter Solstice Sunset at America's Stonehenge*

#### *Sun Spirit goes into Underworld for the winter*

The winter solstice ceremony had multiple parts. Due to the article's space limitations it is being presented in an abbreviated form. For a full work up on the structures and measurements please see Winter Solstice Sunset Area pages 35 – 40 in the book *The Architecture of America's Stonehenge*.

(1) Alignment stone: 4' 4" high triangular shaped stone slab with a point and two shoulders. Attached to the alignment stone at ground level is a second blunt topped triangular stone slab called the anchor stone. A comparison is presented with the shape of the summer solstice sunset alignment stone. Summer solstice sunset stone is a 3'8" high triangular shaped stone slab with a point and two shoulders. The two sunset alignment stones have the same basic shape and height. This shows intentionality. The winter sunset alignment stone was erected near the edge of the hill on the southern end of the west side.



Figure 36 – Winter Solstice sunset stone. America's Stonehenge

<sup>33</sup> Fewkes 1906, 358.

(2) Split bedrock with three triangular standing stones: Approximately half-ways down the hillside on the southwestern end is exposed bedrock with multiple splits. Leaned up against the upper most split are three short triangular stone slabs. They are side by side. Inside the split is a single layer of stones emanating northward across the hillside.



Figure 37 – Three triangular standing stones (America' Stonehenge)

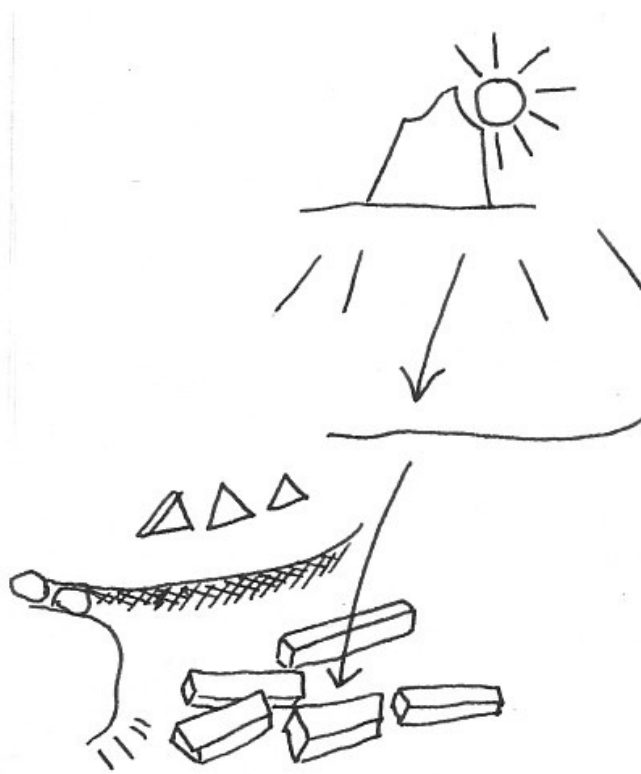


Figure 37A – Author's interpretation of how the alignment and split bedrock functioned



## *Interpretation*

The alignment stone on the top edge of the hill aligns with the split bedrock half-ways down the hillside. When the author viewed the winter solstice sunset the sun appeared to slide over the shoulder of the alignment stone and set in the split. The split is not visible during the viewing of the sunset but knowledge of its location permitted the observation by the author. It was an allusion but none-the-less real to the people who believed Sun Spirit went into the Underworld for the winter months. The stones inside the split and triangular slabs leaning against the split prove the split was used in a ceremony. The triangular shape of the three slabs is symbolic. The specific shape was used throughout the site as a feature.

The following is the author's recreation of the winter solstice sunset ceremony using the stone structures as a guide:

*During the winter solstice ceremony at the America's Stonehenge site the sun is guided by the alignment stone down to the split stone spirit portal where it enters the Underworld. On the next day the sphere of the sun rises as normal but without its spirit. The spirit of the sun separated from the sphere and remained in Underworld for the duration of the winter.*

The question is why did this take place? The answer was found in accounts by the Ojibwa and Cherokee (see quotations under *First Americans View of Underworld* on page 6). In the quotes it shows a belief that when it was winter on earth (includes Upperworld) it was summer in Underworld and vice versa. For that to occur the sun had to have divide its time between the two worlds. This provides a purpose and reason as to why First Americans held a belief in the Sun Spirit leaving Upperworld for the winter and going into Underworld.

At the America's Stonehenge site the sunset alignment stone was used to guide Sun Spirit down to the split stone spirit portal where it entered Underworld. This differs from the Hopi "sun post" and the alignment stone at the southeastern New Hampshire site. The Hopi used the sun-post to track the movement of the sun not as a guide for the Sun Spirit. The same appears to have taken place at the southeastern New Hampshire site in which the alignment stone appears to have been used to track the sun's movement while the see-through niche underneath was used to guide the Sun Spirit. The Hopi guided the Sun Spirit with a twirling shield and ladder sticks that were presented as offerings. The ladder stick offerings equate to the perishable offering made in the niche under the alignment stone at the New Hampshire site. With the equinox sunrise alignment yet another type of usage was found for an alignment stone.

Though the specifics differ from alignment to alignment the underlying concept does not. Solar alignment stones signify Sun Spirit is traveling. The purpose of its travel in most cases is to go between Upperworld and Underworld. In one case the Sun Spirit was called into a ceremonial site for a day of ceremony as seen at the summer solstice alignment at the America's Stonehenge site. It is not being presented as there is no split stone feature associated with it. For a full write up please read the chapter in the book, *The Architecture of America's Stonehenge*.

## *Equinox Sunrise at America's Stonehenge*

Sun Spirit comes out of Underworld to return to Upperworld

This is a combined unit of structures. It is being presented in an abbreviated form. For a full work up on the structures and measurements please see Spring Equinox Sunrise Alignment pages 54 – 57 in the book *The Architecture of America's Stonehenge*.

(1) Alignment stone: 4' high rectangular stone slab with a single slanted side and short, shallow concave crescent shaped indentation on top (top right). Of interest but not being discussed is the summer solstice sunrise alignment stone which is located within the same stonewall as the equinox sunrise alignment stone. The attention to detail of the builders of the site is worth noting. The summer alignment stone is a 3' 10" high rectangular shaped stone slab with a single long slanted side with a short shaft-like point on top (top left). The two alignment stones though not identical have the same basic shape and nearly same height. That was intentional. The reason the summer solstice sunrise alignment is not being discussed further is no split stone is associated with it.

(2) Split Boulder with Niche Attached: A few feet north of the alignment stone is the split boulder with a see-through niche attached to its east side. The east side is the downhill side. Of note, the split boulder when documented in the early 2000s did not contain any stones inside the split. Since then visitors have placed stones inside thus altering its appearance. There needs to be signage to inform visitors that adding or taking stones away alters the stone structure interfering with its study. (See Figs. 32 & 33)

(3) Standing stone with U-shaped top opening: It is located a few feet east and downhill of the split boulder and niche. The standing stone over the years has become tilted. Its tilted position has not disturbed the downhill / eastward orientation of the U-shaped opening. That is important. This feature has been confirmed by its presence at other sites as being a spirit portal travel guide whereby it directs a spirit in the proper direction. In this case, it lines up with and directs a spirit to a lodge down slope where the parking lot is today.



Figure 38 – Equinox sunrise stone, America's Stonehenge



Figure 39 – Standing stone with U-Shape top opening. America's Stonehenge



(4) Remains of a wigwam lodge and two hearths were excavated in the lower parking lot. The hearths yielded charcoal that was radio carbon dated to 1910 years before present (present being the year 1950 when C14 dating was introduced), 1640 years before present and 1195 years before present. No artifacts were found at the lodge. The lack of artifacts indicates the lodge was used for ceremonies and not as a habitation structure. In turn, the hearths held ceremonial fires.

These are the main structures making up the equinox alignment unit.

*Interpretation*

The alignment stone aligned to the equinox sunrise shows this ceremonial area was focused on the Sun Spirit. In the winter solstice ceremony the Sun Spirit went into the Underworld for the duration of the winter. At some point in the year the Sun Spirit needed to return to the Upperworld. Logically that would occur either on the spring equinox or summer solstice. Since the equinox has a split stone spirit portal and the summer solstice does not it is interpreted that the equinox sunrise ceremony was when the Sun Spirit returned from Underworld. That shows the ceremony was held on the spring equinox. The following is the author’s recreation of the equinox sunrise ceremony using the structures as a guide:

*In the equinox ceremony the Sun Spirit first has to emerge out of Underworld. That occurs via the split stone with the attached niche containing an offering to get the spirit to come out. Next the Sun Spirit is directed downhill like as done at the winter solstice sunset alignment. That is accomplished by Sun Spirit using the U shaped spirit portal directing it down to the lodge. At the lodge there is a fire with smoke. Fire and smoke are intermediaries who work with other spirits. For this to take place the Sun Spirit had to come out of the Underworld prior to sunrise. At the lodge it waited for the right moment then the smoke carried the spirit back up hill. While the sphere is low in the sky, Upperworld, Sun Spirit travels up to the alignment stone and settles in the small concave depression on top. There it awaits the sphere to rise up to the alignment stone where the Sun Spirit can reunite with it and return to Upperworld for the warm weather months.*

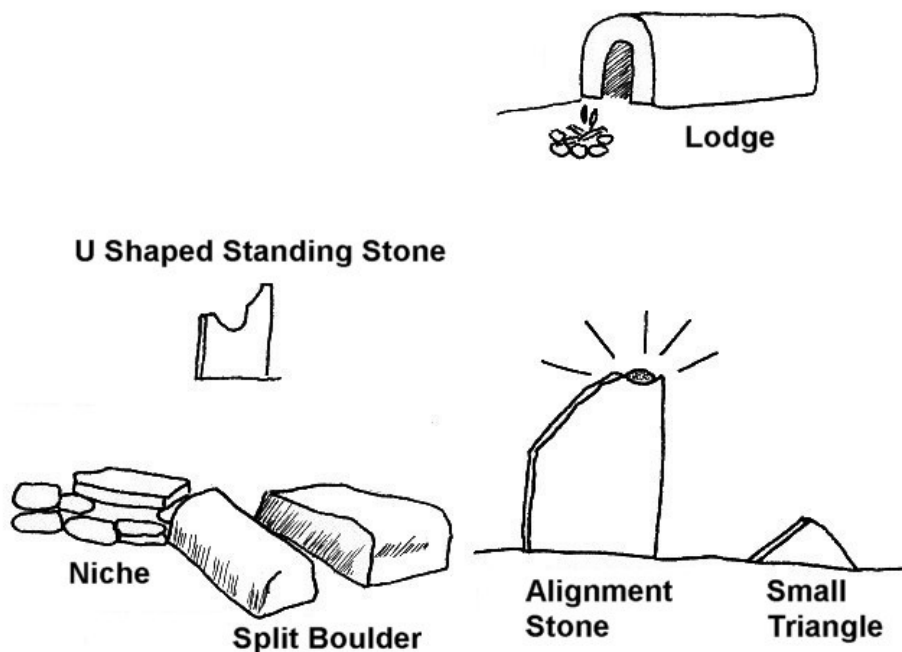


Figure 39A - Equinox sunrise unit at America’s Stonehenge

The recreation shows how the people assisted the Sun Spirit in its journey by placing an offering in the niche to entice it to use the split stone spirit portal to emerge out of Underworld. From there they directed the Sun Spirit down to the ceremonial lodge where the people again assisted the spirit through the intervention of fire and “smoke” the latter rising upwards, carrying Sun Spirit up hill to the alignment stone. The alignment stone with its small concave depression on top allowed the spirit a place to stay until the sphere of the sun was aligned with it at which time Sun Spirit rejoined the sphere of the sun and took its proper place in Upperworld. The interpretation is drawn from the various accounts presented in the niche and alignment structure.

The equinox alignment stone functioned differently than the first two alignment stones discussed. The southeastern New Hampshire equinox sunset alignment stone was used to track the sun’s movements. The winter sunset solstice alignment stone at America’s Stonehenge was used to guide Sun Spirit on its correct trajectory. The equinox sunrise alignment stone at America’s Stonehenge was used to hold the Sun Spirit until the sphere of the sun arrived so that the spirit could rejoin it. The differences show stone structures were created for specific purposes albeit those such as solar alignments had a similar underlying purpose. Each functioned a little differently contributing to the one-of-a-kind stone structures.

To gain a basic understanding of the importance and purpose of alignments there needs to be collaboration between anthropology accounts from First Americans and stone structures. This can only occur when the stone structures are arranged as a unit like at America’s Stonehenge. To do so a researcher must first know what he or she is looking at to interpret a structure like the standing stone with a U shaped opening in its top. This unassuming stone could easily have been overlooked which would have changed the interpretation. The standing stone was the link between the equinox alignment stone and ceremonial lodge at the bottom of the hill. Although a seemingly unlikely link it was the catalyst that provided the necessary piece of data to fully understand what took place at the Spring Equinox Sunrise Ceremony. Study of stone structure sites must be all inclusive. As it does not disturb or destroy evidence this is possible and necessary.

## **Serpents & Underworld**

### ***Enclosure Attached to Split Stone***

Location: Hopkinton, Rhode Island

Enclosure: (Interior) 4’ wide by 4’ long

Split Boulder: 7’ high by 10’ long

A tall split glacial boulder forms the back wall of enclosure #10. Under its wide side is a horizontal opening. Both splits (vertical and horizontal) were incorporated into the back wall of the enclosure. The enclosure is on the south side of the outcrop with its entry opening towards the south. The interior holds a single person. Splits and openings in boulders are spirit portals for spirits to come [out of] and go into the rock. The enclosure was likely used to make contact with the spirit within this split rock.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> This paragraph was reprinted from the author’s book *Land of a Thousand Cairns*. (Gage & Gage 2020, 113)





Figures 40 & 41 – one person enclosure attached to a glacial boulder with a vertical split (top photo) and a horizontal opening under the edge of the boulder (bottom photo). Hopkinton, RI.  
Photos courtesy of Steve DiMarzo Jr.

The concept of a spirit associated with a split in stone is seen in this quote. “Certain dwarfs [spirits] haunt a crevasse in a rock on French river, where they sometimes make themselves visible; if you throw them some food they disappear.” French River is on Parry Island in the Canadian Shield of the Great Lakes.<sup>35</sup>

In Maine, First Americans talked about building a house without a roof. The open top places the structure in a similar category to an enclosure. “... and on the morrow [next day] when the sun is highest you shall all meet on a high ground and there build a house the entrance of which shall be low, so that you creep like the babe on entering it; but the top shall be made open. ... After this is done, one of you, he that entered first shall sing, and in his singing shall call the spirit of every living thing, and the different spirits will come to the call. And after you have talked with them they will all depart ...”<sup>36</sup>

The two above quotes were recorded between the late 1800s and early 1900s. The French River quote mentioned spirits reside in a “crevasse” a large split in the rock and a food (perishable) offering is made to those spirits. The Maine quote speaks of calling spirits into the open topped house (enclosure like structure). Combined the quotes show the elements documented in the enclosure attached to the split boulder has a strong potential of a spirit(s) being called forth into an enclosed structure that brought a person and spirit together.

Accounts of what took place inside enclosures are rare. This one was taken from the Dance Drum enclosure. The Dance Drum enclosure was round and designed to hold a large number of people. According to Johnny Matchokamow, “They claim that outside the dancing ground [enclosure] some bad spirits are outside.”<sup>37</sup> One of the enclosure’s purposes was to separate the good spirits inside from the bad spirits outside.

The Ojibwa dance drum enclosure is a prime example to show variations in a ceremony and how they come about. “... Indian ceremonials – far from being static institutions – are constantly subject to changes and accretions through individual visions.”<sup>38</sup> (ibid 46) According to Thomas Vennum Jr., Smithsonian folklife researcher, these are not from vision quests, they are dreams which occur both night and day that are “based on revelations to individuals in which ritual details and songs were dictated.”<sup>39</sup> This statement explains why no two ceremonial structures are alike.

The Rhode Island enclosure attached to the split boulder is part of a large cairn complex on the 1800s farm of Jonathan Foster. It is part of a cairn field that contains a serpent effigy. The serpent effigy was made up of a single stone high line of stones set in a serpentine layout. On its end is the head consisting of two stacked flat stones setting it off from the body. The serpent emerges from Foster’s sheep pasture wall. Part of the stone wall enclosing the end of the sheep pasture with the attached serpent has a distinct element, the capstones jut out over the top edge of the wall. This section is a short distance away from the serpent effigy. The presence of a sheep pasture wall with an attached serpent effigy suggests the associated enclosure attached to the split boulder was likely built in the 1800s during the farm’s operation. Since it was part of the cairn field with the serpent effigy it was likely part of the Serpent Ceremony. Serpent’s were an integral part of agriculture see *Serpent & Split Stone Cairn* next.

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<sup>35</sup> Jenness 1935, 43.

<sup>36</sup> Nicolai 1893, 84-85.

<sup>37</sup> Quoted in Vennum 1982, 118.

<sup>38</sup> Vennum 1982, 46.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 147-152.





Figure 42 – Serpent effigy attached to an historic 19<sup>th</sup> century sheep pasture wall. The head (on left) is formed by a two stone rock stack. Hopkinton, RI. Photo courtesy of Steve DiMarzo Jr.

## ***Serpent & Split Stone Cairn***

### *Stone Serpent Effigy on Top of a Split Boulder*

This was discovered in the back corner of an abandoned pasture suggesting it was associated with a historic farm on an old section of the Shaghticoke Indian Reservation. The effigy on top of the cairn is part of a cairnfield site.<sup>40</sup> The split boulder had five separate sections with four splits.

Four splits:

S1- Single extra large slab inside (Slab: 4 inches thick x 18 inches high x 30 inches long)

S2 & S3 – West side filled with extra large and large boulders, these hold in smaller stones on opposite (east) riverside of cairn. East side is filled with medium and small sized stones forming a massive mound that extends through Split 4 and out onto the top of boulder B3

S4 – Filled with medium and small stones creating a large mound of several thousand stones

Stone size: Extra large, large, medium, small

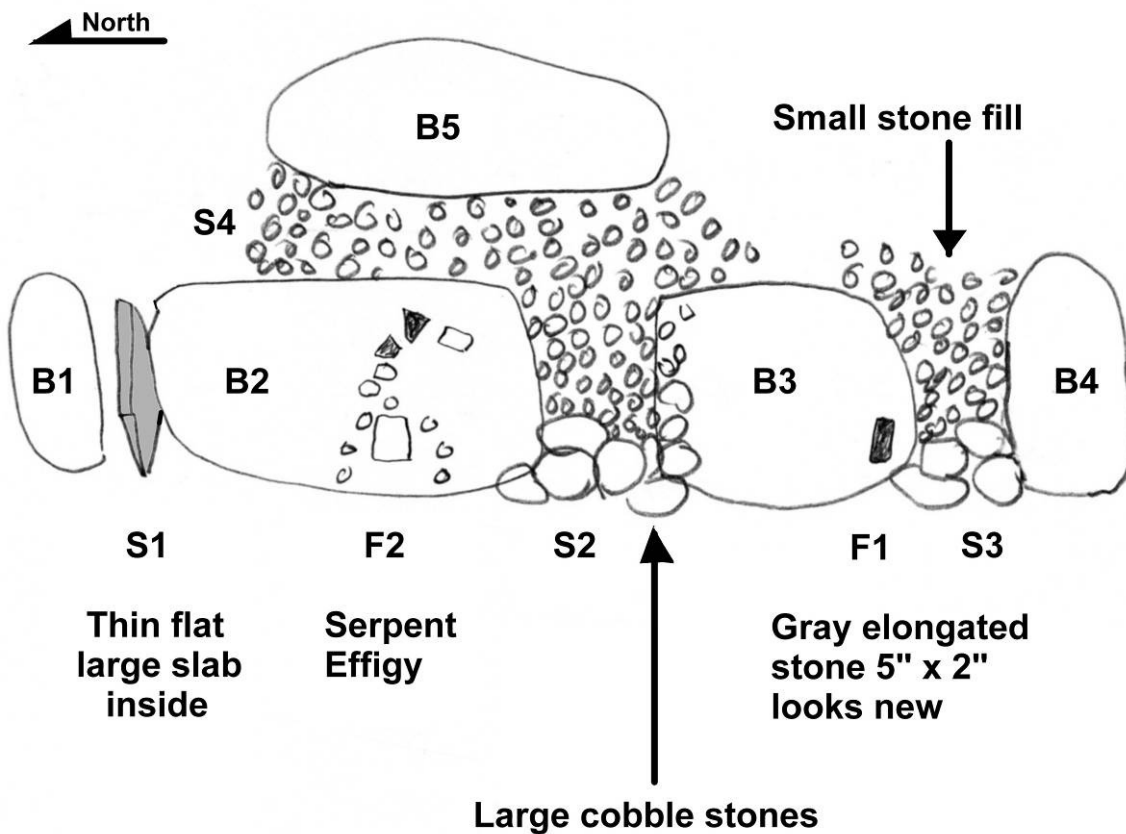


Figure 43 – Overview showing the layout and organization of the split stone cairn

<sup>40</sup> Gage & Gage 2019.



F2 – Serpent Effigy on top boulder B2. It was found by accident when brushing off the leaves to get a photo of the large stone that appears to be being swallowed by the serpent. I covered it back up after taking photos. Serpent was made up of small stones laid out in a single layer in the configuration of a serpent. Many of the stones are embedded in a layer of humus indicating it is original to the cairn and old.

Body:

- Last stone is light colored and lacks humus, possible later addition.
- Next is a dark colored triangular stone, probably the original last stone in tail.
- Next is a common gray stone.
- After that is a roundish white stone, symbolic.
- Three more stones follow to the point of two stones overlapping. At this point the line of stones split as in an upside down “Y”. The stones remain about the same size going out and around a large stone (8 inches wide x 12 inches long) to the edge of the boulder
- Tucked in alongside of the large stone is a small stone. Tiny stones (1”) were found and felt in the humus.

Size: Approximately 3 feet long<sup>41</sup>

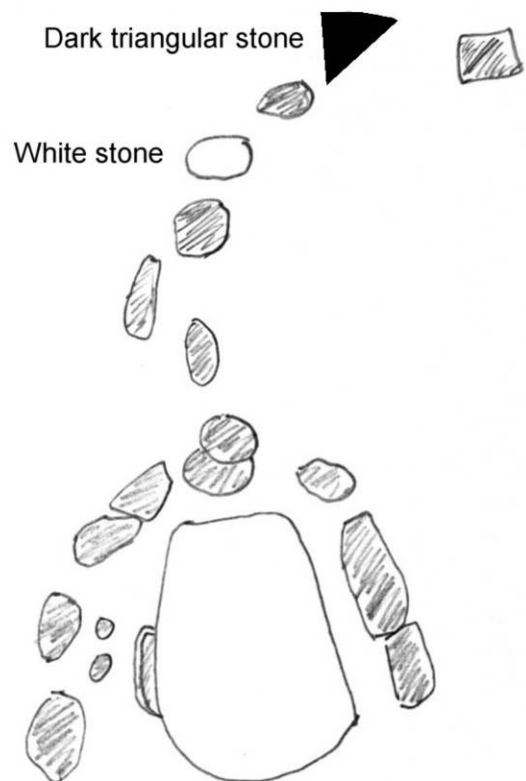


Figure 44 – Serpent effigy with a large stone in its mouth. The large stone is a symbolic object (i.e. seed).

<sup>41</sup> The structure's description is reprinted from the author's online paper "Serpents and Agriculture: The Power of the Seed" available at <https://www.academia.edu/43135894> (Note: minor edits were made).





Figure 45 (top) – Overall view of the split stone cairn.

Figure 46 (Right) – The cairn contains over a thousand stones. The large number of stones indicates it is a community cairn where many members of the community placed offerings during the ceremony.





The serpent effigy was integrated into a large split stone cairn. That places a serpent spirit as emerging from the Underworld via the split stone spirit portal. This cairn is located in an abandoned pasture indicating it may have been associated with the farm. My article *Serpents and Agriculture: The Power of the Seed* explored this subject in depth. What was found was serpents were directly associated with farming through two means: bringing seeds to the people and bringing rain. And in addition as the quotes below attest to they were believed to have “powerful medicine” and “be messengers to the underworld”. Accounts of serpents and snakes are found across North America.

### *Petroglyph*

Mi’kmaq (Nova Scotia, Canada): “Two images of Jipijka’m, a horned serpent who was said to live underwater, are found at the Fairy Bay and Mill Bay petroglyph loci on the [Kejimikujik] lake. In one Mi’kmaq story, the snake or serpent has a large head and crystal-like eyes that are very powerful medicine. Snakes were considered to be messengers to the underworld and inspired fear and respect in Indian people ...”<sup>42</sup>

### *Tattoo*

Snake Tattoo on a Stockbridge (MA) Indian: “Shabash was an honored chief among his people, and bore tattoos in the likeness of a snake on both cheeks.”<sup>43</sup>

### *Personators*

Jesse Walter Fewkes was a noted ethnologist at the Smithsonian’s Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE) from 1895 until his death in 1930. He was president of the American Anthropological Association from 1911 to 1912, and served as director of the BAE from 1918 to 1928. In his study of Hopi religious ceremonies, Fewkes noted that:

“The Zuni have an equivalent of the Hopi horned serpent, whose effigy, mechanically attached to tablets on which rain clouds are depicted, is brought into the town and carried to the entrance of each kiva. The head of the effigy is held over the kiva hatchway, while water with seeds are poured through the body, emerging from the mouth into receptacles held up to receive them – an act symbolic of water and seeds for the coming planting time, the gifts which the Great Serpent brings to the Zuni.”<sup>44</sup>

In the above quote, seeds are added to the rain water the serpent brings to the people. According to Fewkes, “The Sky god, symbolized by both the sun and horned serpent, is the beneficent Sky god who fertilizes the seed, brings the rain, and causes the crops to grow.”<sup>45</sup>

### *Discussion*

The Mi’kmaq of the northeast held the serpent had “powerful medicine.” In another example, they said snakes carried messages into the Underworld. Personators were people who took on the form of a spirit denoted in Stockbridge, Massachusetts and in the Zuni of the southwest Pueblo culture. The Zuni’s

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<sup>42</sup> Lenik 2002, 21.

<sup>43</sup> Wheeler 2008, 70.

<sup>44</sup> Fewkes 1920, 501.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

serpent effigy carried by members of the tribe brought water and seed to the people. Hence, a direct relationship is seen between the serpent and agriculture. The serpent being the spirit who brought the people both rain/water for their crops and seeds to plant those crops. The stone serpent effigy on top the split stone cairn shows an association with the Underworld. At the same time, being integrated into a pasture suggests an association with agriculture. The same two concepts that showed up in the anthropological accounts.

This obscure cultural data is relevant to analyzing the stone structures incorporating serpents and snakes at CSL sites. It also raises questions about the Horned Serpent's cultural role.

*Cairn associated with a natural effigy*

“Many of the older members of the Court Oreilles band of Chippewas, in Northwestern Wisconsin, are still pagans [as of 1905]. The French Catholic missionaries have lived and labored among them since Du Luth and La Salle, but several worship stones are still in existence, and religious rites and ceremonies are carried on before them.

The most highly regarded idol has been the Pipe of the Manitou. It is a black and white granite boulder three feet high, shaped much like a prehistoric hammer, with a slight depression in the top or broad end. It stood on the projecting point of a ridge 200 feet high overlooking an area of wild and unbroken country at the head of Lake Chetac. The pointed end was embedded in a small mound of boulders and pebbles. Although a road leads around the hill the moccasined feet of the Indians have worn a deep trail up past the Pipe of the Manitou. Each Indian deposited a generous pinch of tobacco in the hollow on top of the stone, and seated on the ground smoked a pipe in solemn and contemplative silence.”<sup>46</sup>

This quote about a natural stone effigy mentions a cairn “a small mound of boulders and pebbles” attached to the boulder. It confirms First Americans built combination effigy / cairn structures.

The Connecticut split stone cairn had an extensive quantity of stones over a thousand indicating this was a community cairn in which all members attending the ceremony contributed a stone offering. Stone offerings are well documented in the historic trailside cairns in Eva Bulter's 1946 article “The Brush or Stone Memorial Heaps of Southern New England” in the *Bulletin Archaeological Society of Connecticut*.

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<sup>46</sup> Brown, 1905, 165.



### *Split Stone Cairn with Tongue*

In another abandoned pasture on the old section of the Shaghticoke reservation is an unusual split stone cairn. It is being presented as it contributes to the wide diversity of split stone cairns. Its description comes from a report submitted to the State of Connecticut.

#### (12B) Split Stone Cairn - *Specialized*

Side 1 – 16”H x 1½’W x 5½’L

Side 2 – 1½’H x 2’W x 6’L

Cairn: Stones intentionally placed (see drawing with corresponding letters)

- (a) Stacked: stones were stacked on a small shelf on one end
- (b) One large stone was tilted to go across top of opening of split at the shelf level
- (c) Small stone inside split on ground
- (d) Rough textured stones were semi-layered on top
- (e) Single smooth whitish stone was set apart on top (not shown, on back side)
- (f) Large stones overlap edge of side 1 abut two large stones on side 2, together the stones cover the split
- (g) Two large stones on top of side 1
- (h) Stone projects above and below split: Triangular shaped top shows above split  
Bottom of stone (shape not determined) projects into split  
Color: Yellowish-white  
This is the stone named the “tongue”
- (i) Small stone on ground at entrance to split (Not shown – on back side)

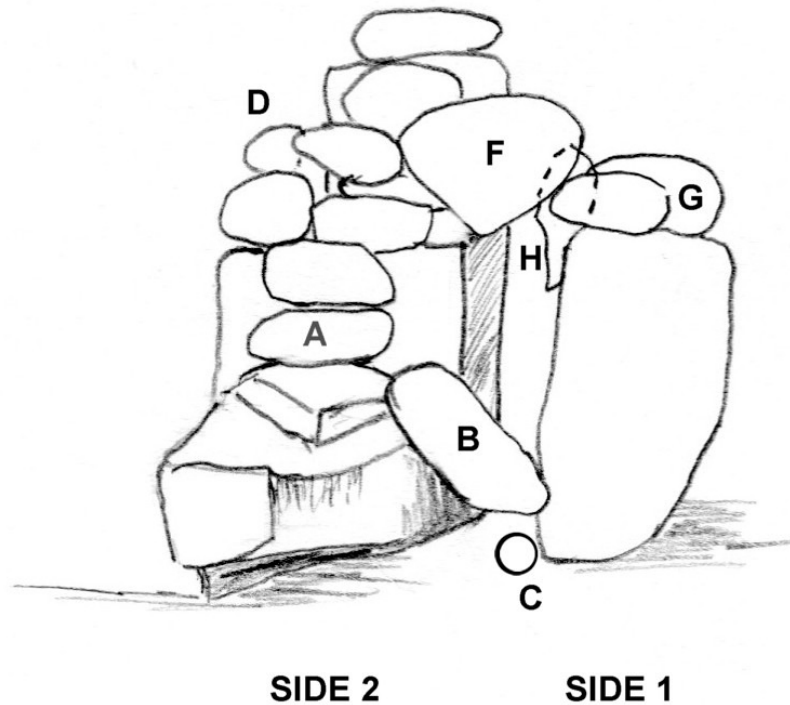
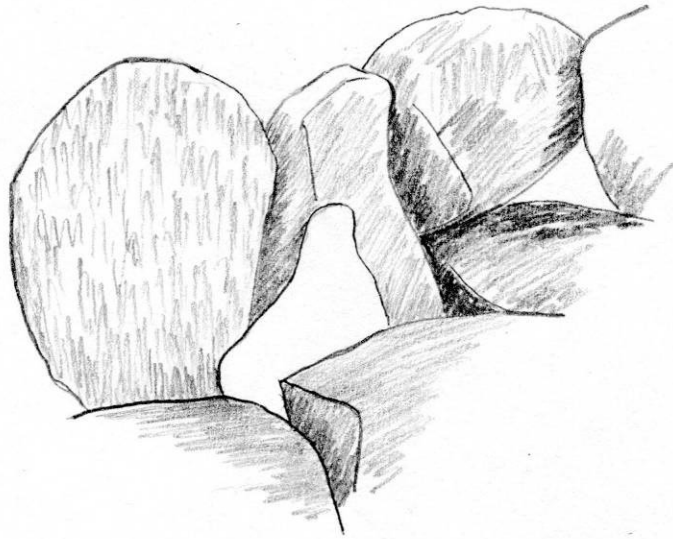
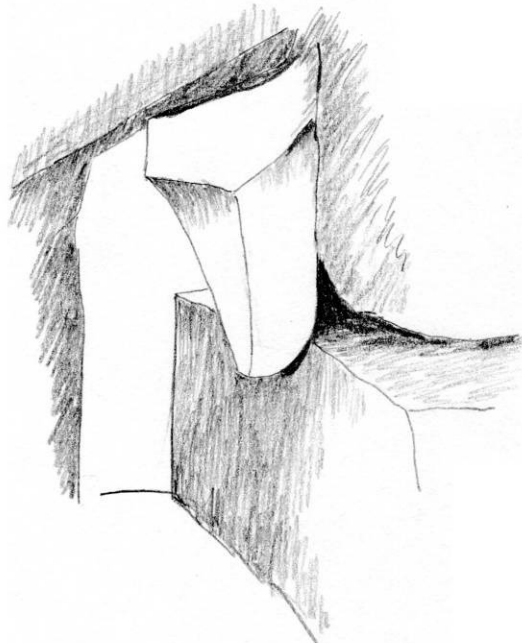


Figure 47 – Split stone cairn with “tongue” feature (H)

Note: Features E & I are on the backside of the structure and are not shown (see fig.53)



**Straight-on view  
protruding above  
top of split**



**Side view  
interior  
protruding into  
split**

Figure 48 – Detailed drawing showing the “tongue” like feature

This is an unusual split stone cairn with a specialized purpose. The “tongue” for lack of a better term is unique. The cairn’s overall appearance is quite different when viewed from the north versus the south side. The feature shows up only on the north side. The tongue’s purpose is unknown.





Figure 49 – “Tongue” feature protruding upwards



Figure 50 – “Tongue” feature protruding downward





Figure 51 – View of stone cairn as shown in fig. 47. Side 2 on the left and Side 1 on the right.



Figure 52 – This view shows side 1 of the specialized split stone cairn.





Figure 53 – View of the split stone cairn from the opposite side as shown in fig. 51.

Side 1 is on the left and Side 2 on the right.

(e) Single smooth whitish stone was set apart on top

(i) Small stone on ground at entrance to split



## Water & Split Stone Cairns

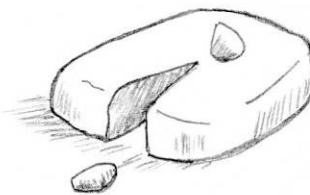
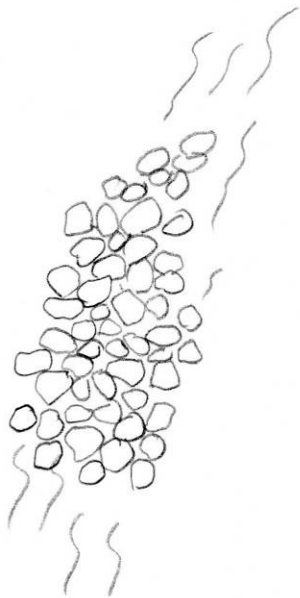
Some CSL sites contain cairns in water. Most are in seasonal streams fed by snow melt and springtime rains. These are associated with Upperworld and rain water. A few have been documented at the head of a spring fed stream. Springs are where underground water emerges out onto the surface of the earth. Spring water is associated with the Underworld. Many of these cairns are stone mounds though there are other designs including split stone cairns. Here are two examples.

### ***Seasonal Runoff Stream – E. Kingston, NH***

At this site there is a large stone mound cairn in a seasonal runoff stream on the edge of a wetland area. During the springtime the stream is fed by snow melt and heavy spring time rains. During the summer the stream dries up. A few feet into the wetland is a boulder (2' high) with a cleft in its side and one stone on top. The cleft is a V shaped split going a 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the way into the boulder. It is significant. At the point the cleft ends a single stone was placed. There is no doubt the two cairns are associated with each other. What is also of interest is the seasonal stream flows into an expansive wetland where the water pools and seeps into the ground.



Figure 54 – Split stone with single stone on top



**Actual shape of stone on top is unknown. Did not want to remove moss covering it. See photo.**

Figure 55 – Stone mound in a seasonal stream and associated nearby stone with V shaped split.



*Cherokee*

“The streams that come down from the mountains are the trails by which we reach this underworld ...”<sup>47</sup>

The quote is a general statement yet it shows a connection between streams and Underworld. The stone mound cairn in the stream is a physical connection that was combined with a split stone spirit portal in the wetland. Together the two cairns form a connection between the stream of water and Underworld.

***Spring & Stream – Hopkinton, RI***

On Jonathan Foster’s 1800’s fifty acre farm there are cairns found throughout every part of it, over 1,000 of them along with the remains of a double house foundation and large barn foundation. One of the cairns is a split wedge cairn situated in the head of a spring whose water feeds a small stream.

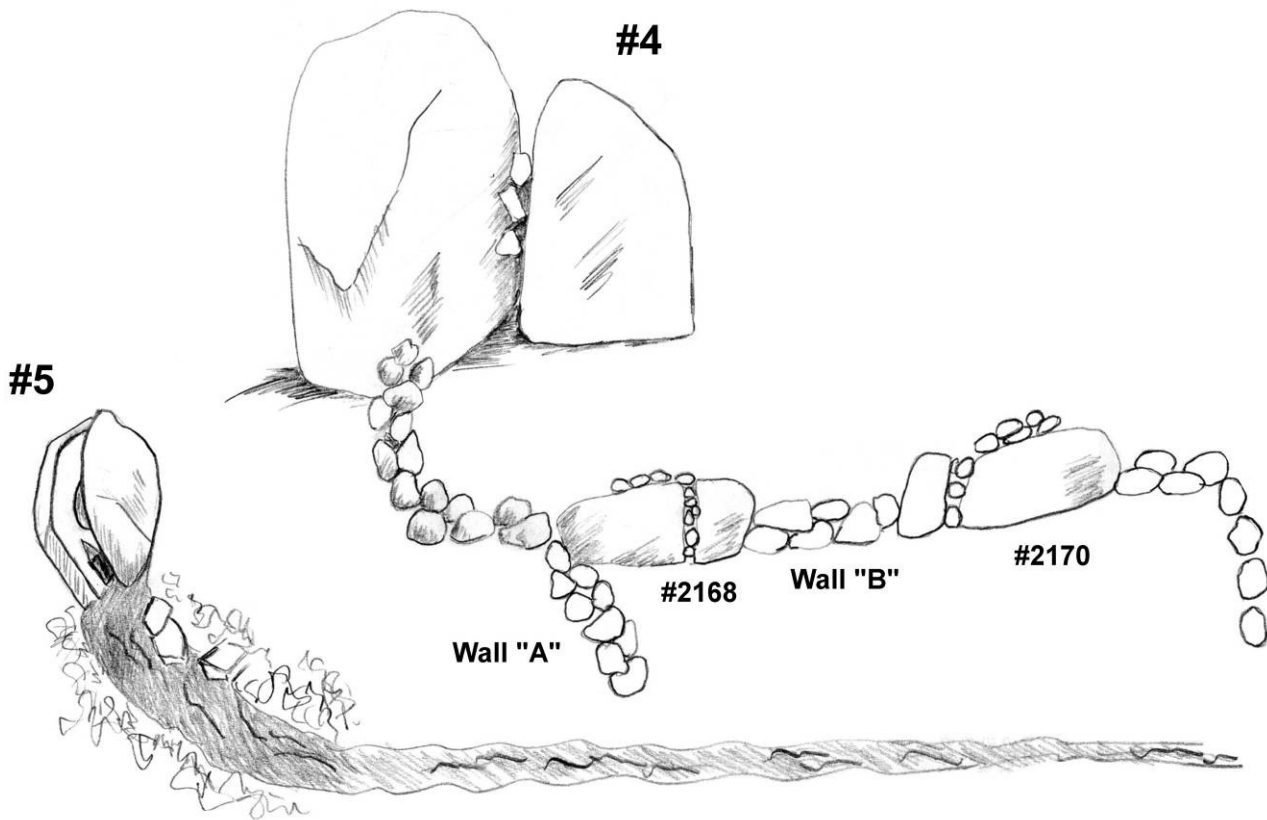


Figure 56 – Structure #5 is a split wedge cairn at the head of a spring that feeds a stream. Hopkinton, RI. Associated with an enclosure attached to a split stone #4.

<sup>47</sup> Mooney 1900, 240.



Figures 57 & 58 – Split wedge cairn at the head of a spring.

Here again the author turns to a Cherokee quote.

“the springs at their heads are the doorways by which we enter it [Underworld]”<sup>48</sup>

This quote is specific in that it states the head of a spring is the entrance to Underworld. The split wedge cairn in this unit was created in the head of the spring where water comes out of the ground. Here a direct correlation can be made. The split wedge cairn enhances the quote by having a spirit portal directly in the spring. It is a proof of concept example.

In close proximity is a tall split glacial boulder with a few stones in the split and a low stone wall forming an enclosure that extends out near the spring fed stream and includes two more split stone cairns (see fig. 56). The enclosure is on dry land. Together the enclosure and split stone cairn in the head of the spring form a unit. The unit suggests both the Master Spirit of Underworld and Spring Water Spirit were involved in the ceremony.

It should be recognized that although split stone cairns are spirit portals (i.e. entrances and exits to the Underworld) they had various purposes and associations with different spirits of which we from this distance in time can only identify a few.

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<sup>48</sup> Mooney 1900, 240.



## Local Feature Marks Split Stone Cairn

Unusual, unique features specific to a single site show up occasionally. Oftentimes the feature was used several times within the site. Here is an example that was used to identify the location of ceremonial split stone cairns within utilitarian pasture walls.

### *Ceremonial Stone Landscape Site, Gloucester, MA*

This site has a number of ceremonial structures amongst which are two sets of upright stones placed side by side on top of the stonewall.<sup>49</sup> Each set identified the location of a split stone cairn. Set #1 had four stones and set #2 had three stones.

Set #1 contains four short upright stones on top of the stonewall adjacent to a jog in the wall. At the beginning of the jog the stonewall attached to a large boulder that was used to create a niche in the base of the wall. On the oft side of the boulder/niche is a second boulder with a gap filled with stones, a split stone cairn. Directly below the upright stone feature were two more stone structures. A raised boulder set on top of two in-ground boulders underneath it and propped on one corner with two small stones to level the top. The raised boulder was confirmed as an intentional feature by two medium sized stones placed under one end. Its raised status was confirmed by the fact there is a low opening underneath it. Beside it is a cairn created by a second in-ground boulder with an elongated tight group of stones attached to it. Together the five stone structures formed a mini unit. The unit is on the oft side of the pasture adjacent to a swamp with standing water used for a tannery.

Set #2 contains three short upright stones on top of a split glacial boulder incorporated into a stone wall. The split boulder has one thick stone across the top of the split and a second thin slab below it also across the split (see fig. 65). A third stone was found deep inside the split. The stone wall attaches to either side of the split boulder but does not go over the top. The special feature is the three standing stones on top denoting the split stone cairn. A short distance further along the wall is a niche. Together the two structures form a mini unit. In this unit the niche faces into the pasture as does the split stone cairn situated on the pasture side.

### *Discussion*

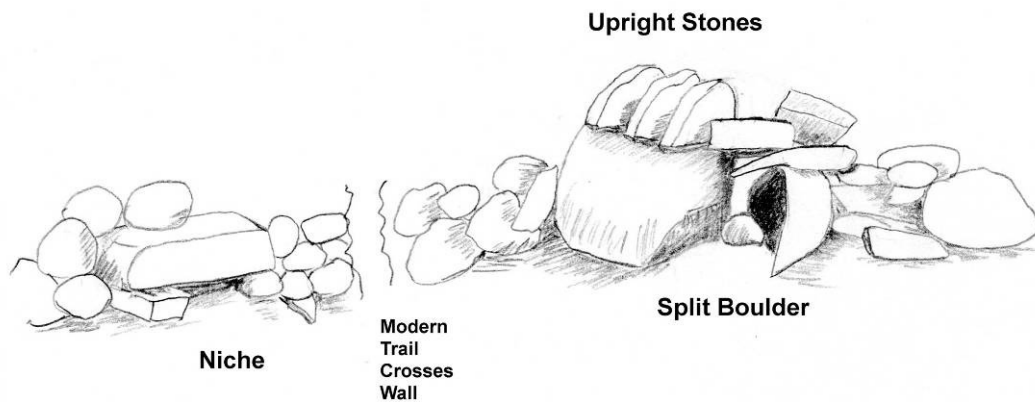
The specialized feature set #1 of upright stones alerted the author to the concept and allowed her to identify set #2. Upon finding set #2 it was investigated for the potential of being a mini unit. The two mini units were at opposite ends of the farm in very differently arranged cairnfields. The second unit (set #2) was in an area where the cairns were widely spread out. This unit faced into the pasture. The first unit (set #1) was in a small enclosed pasture with all the cairns clustered inside. This unit was on the exterior of the pasture wall and faced out. The differences indicate the two units either had different purposes or represent two different time periods. Their core structures, a split stone cairn and niche suggest they had the same purpose but were utilized slightly differently with one facing into the pasture and one facing out of the pasture. The arrangement of cairns in one area being spread out compared to the other area where they were clustered holds with the slight difference seen in the two units. Prior to a historical background search it was possible to identify two parts of the ceremonial site. The next question was what did they represent? The historical search revealed the farm was originally owned by the farmer/tanner who when he died split it up between his two sons. The son who inherited the pasture area with set #1 remained living on the farm. The other son who inherited the pasture area with set #2

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<sup>49</sup> Gage & Gage 2021a.

lived in another part of town. Thus the two ceremonial areas can be accounted for. The father during his life time created set #2 on the pasture he gave to his son who moved away from the farm. The son who inherited the area with the swamp and tannery remained on the farm and created set #1 within his sheep pasture. He lost use of his father's ceremonial area and had to set up his own to carry on the ceremony. Each man (father and son) utilized a set of upright stones on top of a stone wall to identify where a mini ceremonial unit was located. This appears to be for the purpose of letting people who attended the ceremony know of its whereabouts. The same specialized feature used to alert people attending the ceremony of a special unit proved to be useful to the author/researcher. The use of pasture walls to integrate ceremonial stone structures shows the ceremony was incorporated into the farm and thus is a historic era CSL.

## UNIT #2



## UNIT #1

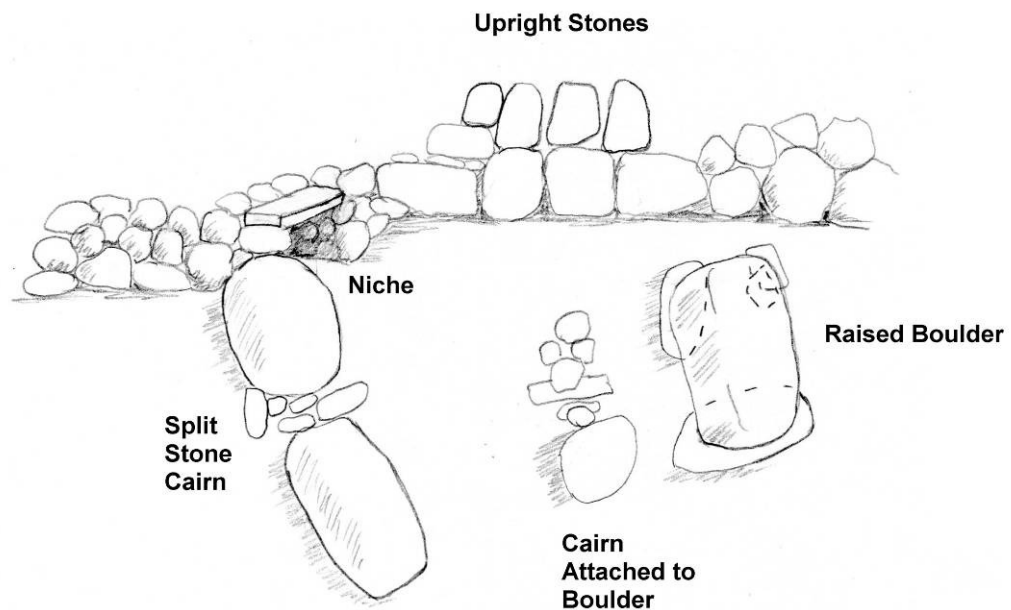


Figure 59 – Comparison of two ceremonial units at the same site which have upright stones feature. Gloucester, MA.



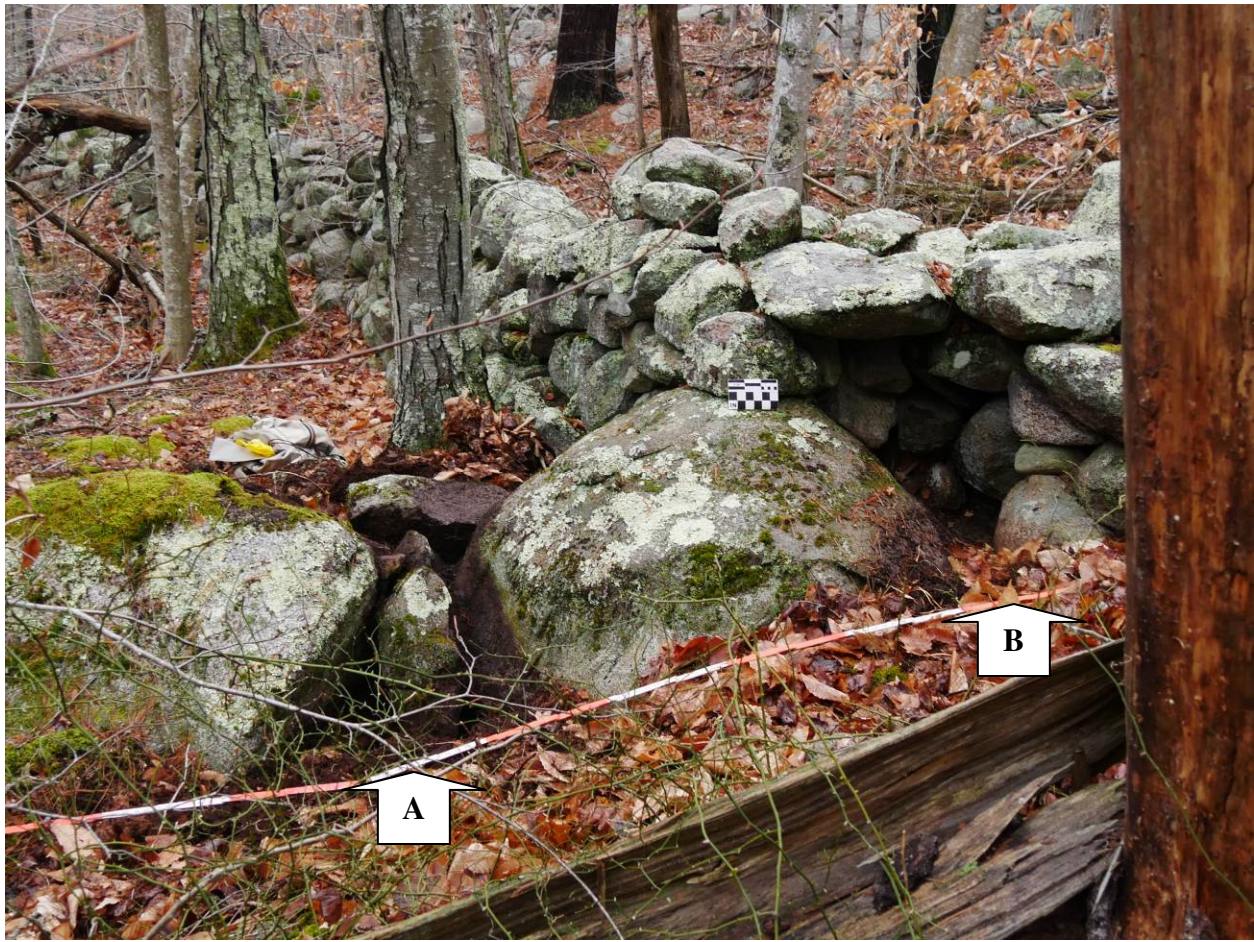


Figure 60 – (A) split stone cairn (B) Niche (Unit #1)



Figure 61 – Raised boulder placed two in ground boulders and propped on one corner by two small stones (Unit #1)





Figure 62 – Four upright stones placed on top of stone wall (Unit #1)



Figure 63 – Stone wall separated a sheep pasture (left side) from a swamp (right side) used for a tannery.





Figure 64 – Split stone integrated into stone wall (Unit #2)



Figure 65 – Arrow indicates three upright stones on top of split stone (Unit #2)





Figure 66 – Stone inside split (Unit #2)



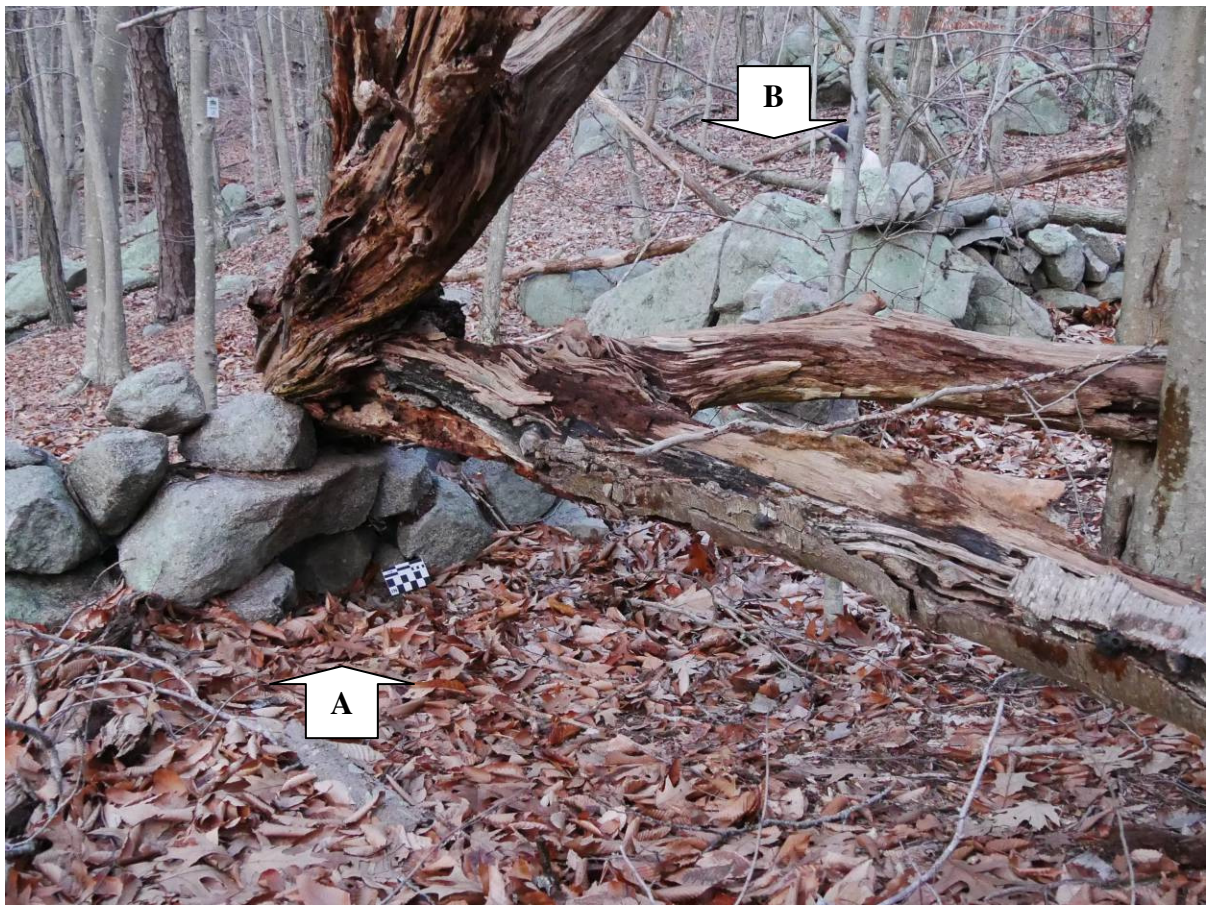


Figure 67 – (A) niche (B) split stone feature (unit #2)



Figure 68 – Niche (Unit #2)

## **Out & In**

“Out & In” refers to the Master Spirit of Underworld being called “out” of Underworld and sent back “in” within a ritual or ceremony. For Underworld Spirit to be present at a ceremony it must first come “out” of the Underworld. That is why “out” comes before “in”. For the spirit to return, it must go back “in” to the Underworld.

Concept was documented as being utilized for different purposes and by different methods.

### Purposes:

- (1) Cairn as part of a ceremony
- (2) Enclosure
- (3) Focus of the ceremony
- (4) End Ritual or Close of Ceremony Ritual

### Methods:

- (1) Single structure
- (2) Multiple structures

## Out & In: Single Structure

Under this section the Out and In spirit portals are represented by a pair of openings within a single structure indicating this activity took place. Two examples have been discovered a cairn-like structure and an enclosure.

### *(1) Cairn-like Structure - Sandown, NH*

Description: Split Boulder (#1- 2’W x 4’L & #2- 1½’W x 2’L) forms base stone  
Two unusually shaped stones on top:

#### Stone (a)

- Semi-smooth surfaced semi-elongated stone with two upward flared protrusions (Figs. 71 & 74) depending on the angle they look different. Plus a protrusion on the front end.
- The upper section with the protrusions has an “L” shaped split. The lower end of the split was placed over the wide split in the base stone.
- From there the split goes about a ¼ of the length towards the opposite end. At that point the split makes a square turn forming the short portion of the “L” shape and goes across the width of the stone.
- Below the short section of split is a small open tunnel. On the exposed side of the stone it looks like a hole going through the stone. The hole/tunnel connects with the long section of the split going down the length of the stone. (see fig. 70).

#### Stone (b)

- Slightly smaller elongated stone with wrinkles on one side and a protruding front portion. A side photo shows three openings underneath, back end has a small low opening, middle a medium opening, front end has a large high opening under the protrusion. This stone is on top of base stone #2 about in the center.

#### Other Features

- Two small stones were recorded on the ground inside the split of the base stone
- Stone plate is under the side of base stone #2 which has an upward slanted portion with an open area underneath



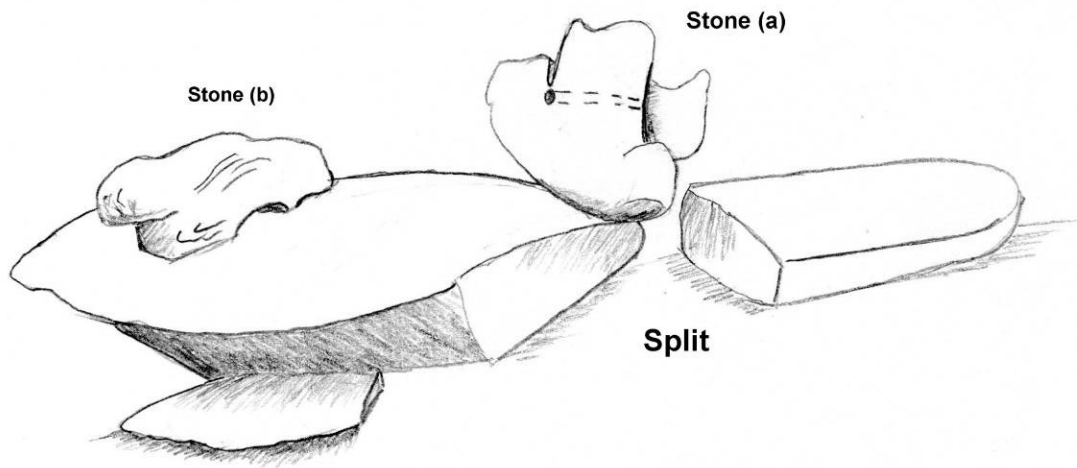


Figure 69 – Relationship of stone “a” and “b” to split base stone

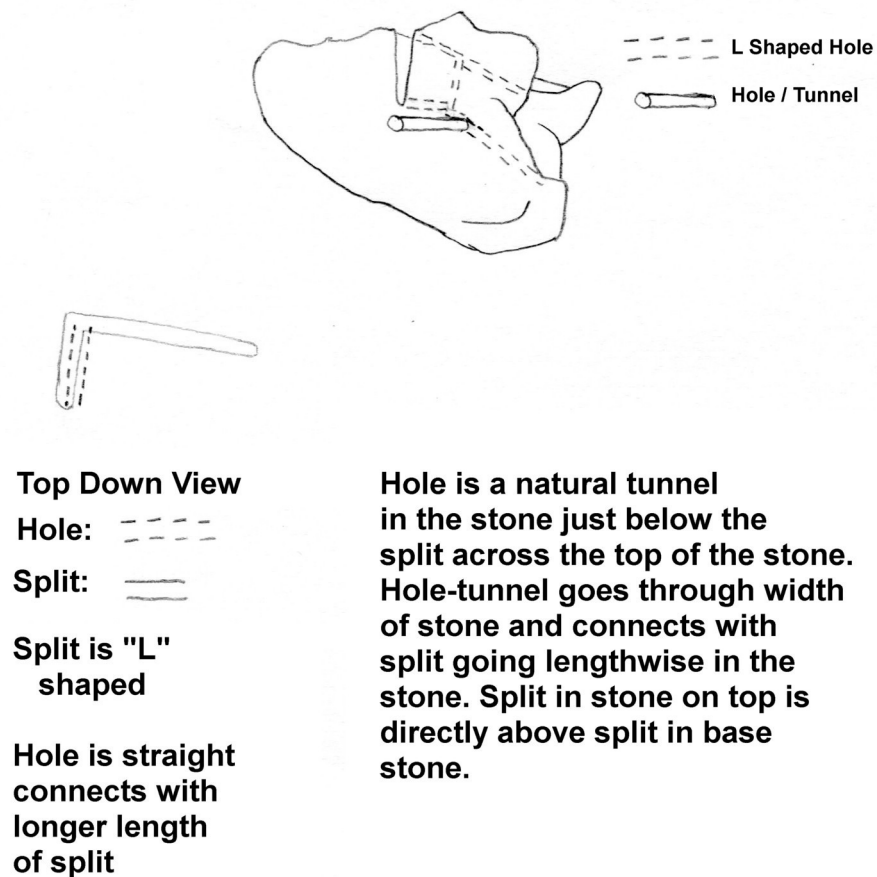


Figure 70 – Detailed explanation of stone “a”

*Interpretation*

In stone “a” the hole/tunnel goes from its exposed side facing the stone “b” and connects with the split along its length creating an interconnected tunnel-split feature. The end of the split was placed directly over the split a “spirit portal” in the base stone. The arrangement was set up for a spirit to be called “out” of the base stone’s split, a spirit portal connected to the Underworld. From there the spirit was directed up through the stone on top with its combined tunnel-split so that it exited the stone on top facing stone “b” on top. There is an open area on the top of the base stone between the two stones on top. It is interpreted as where the spirit stayed during the ceremony. At the end of the ceremony a perishable offering was placed on the stone plate underneath the raised edge of the base stone encouraging the spirit to depart the top of the boulder. The spirit was directed in its travels by a spirit portal on the underside of stone “b”, a low upside down crescent opening. The crescent opening was above the stone plate and opening under the raised edge of the base stone, a spirit portal to the Underworld.

The illustration shows how this structure was designed and functioned plus the purpose of the various spirit portals. The split in the base stone is an exit spirit portal whereby the spirit comes out of Underworld. Stone “a” contains the tunnel-split a directional spirit portal to guide the spirit out on to the top of the boulder. Stone “b” has a low opening on its underside another directional spirit portal to guide the spirit over to the stone plate. The stone plate brought the spirit to the opening under the raised edge of the base stone an entrance spirit portal to the Underworld. Here the spirit went back in the Underworld at the conclusion of the ceremony.

The sophistication of the structure indicates the spirit was likely Master Spirit of Underworld. The concept of a Master Spirit of both Underworld and Upperworld was discovered at the America’s Stonehenge site about twenty miles distant. The pre-contact Master Spirit of Upperworld was the North (Pole) Star. The identity of the Master Spirit of Underworld was not able to be discerned. The concept of a Master spirit called a “guardian spirit” was documented in historic times in the Lake Superior region (see *Calling a Spirit Out of Underworld* page 34).

The “Out and In” structure was in the vicinity of the equinox sunset alignment explained under *Alignment & Niche (without a split stone)* page 35. The two of these structures are part of a cairn site with approximately one hundred ceremonial cairns and two ceremonial enclosures.

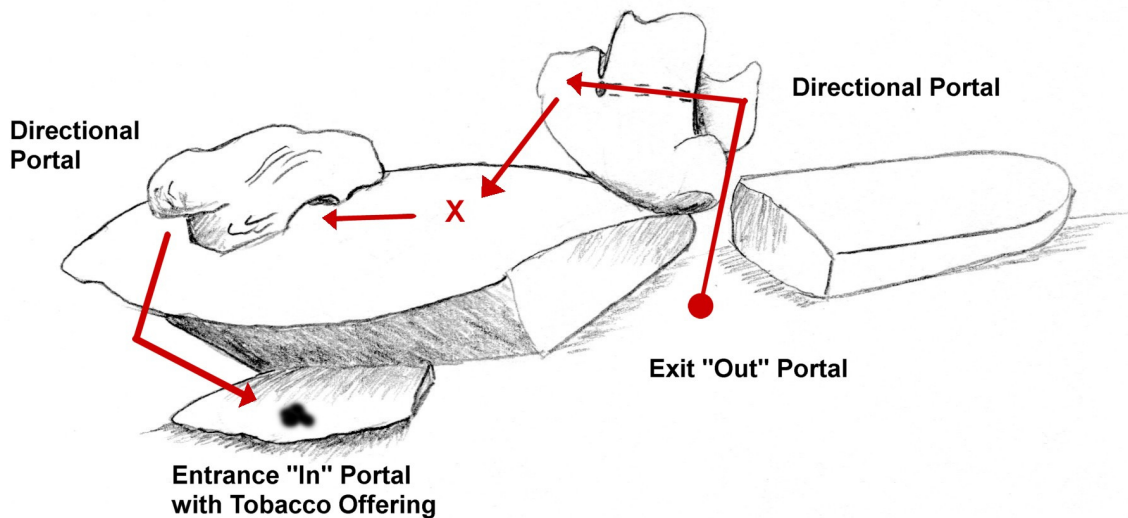


Figure 70A – Author’s interpretation of how the split stone structure functioned.





Figure 71 – Stone “b” on left, Stone “a” on right over split in base stone





Figure 72 – Stone “B”



(Left) Figure 73 – Hole/tunnel below a split leads to a perpendicular split shown in photo on right.  
(Right) Figure 74 – This split stone “a” sits vertically right over the split in the base stone.



## *(2) Enclosure inside a Split Boulder with Historic Plug 'n Feather Quarry Marks*

Location: Acton, MA

- Description: A glacial boulder 6' wide by 20' long was partially quarried. About ¼ of the boulder had the stone removed. The entire boulder had originally been slated to be split up into granite bars as evidenced by several bars found in the area of the boulder and a line of drilled holes across the top of the intact half.
- Quarry evidence: A line of small round holes were drilled the length of the intact half of the boulder. Those holes on the intact half show plug and feathers were inserted and hammered until that half of the boulder split. Nothing more was done with the intact half. Going across the width approximately in the middle is another line of holes. Half of this section of boulder was removed and the other half left in place, hence a quarter of the boulder had the stone removed from it. The quarter section remaining in place and making up the other half of the length does NOT have drilled holes. That shows this boulder originally had a natural split across half its length. It is a key piece of evidence as to why this partially quarried boulder was turned into a ceremonial enclosure.
- Enclosure: A 6' long quarried bar was used as a side wall. It was placed parallel to the length of the section of boulder removed creating an elongated interior approximately 1 ½' wide by 4' long. The shorter length was due to a shaft built inside the enclosure attached to the intact end. A second 3' long block of granite extended the side wall out to the end of the boulder. This end section was closed in with a covered shaft. A third bar of granite 3 ½' long was placed on the ground starting at the end with the covered shaft. It is 1½' out from and parallel with the side wall creating a secondary enclosure 3' long. Its end next to the covered shaft is closed in by a boulder one of four that flank the exterior of the secondary enclosure. Its other end was left open.
- Open topped shaft: The shaft was walled up like a well on two sides with cobble like stones attached to two sides (interior corner) of split boulder forming a semi-square shape. The shaft's interior is half circle and half square inside. On top next to the opening is a flat stone slab equating to a stone plate. It was laid flat. Inside the shaft placed in a vertical position is a Manitou stone (spirit stone). It has a specific shape: neck with two shoulders and torso.
- Closed shaft: It is formed on one side by the 3' long block of stone. The glacial boulder forms the back side. The other two sides were closed by one and two large stones respectively. On top a large Manitou stone was laid flat almost covering the entire top. A small gap formed by the sloping shoulder of the Manitou stone and the closing stone on the end created a small triangular opening. On the interior two colored stones (1) black and (2) white can be seen exposed. Colored stones are known to have symbolic significance. On the exterior a square slab in a vertical position was leaned up against the shaft with a small open interior creating a niche or spirit portal.

The enclosure created out of a historic quarried boulder is part of a cairn site. The quarry method used postdates 1820. Factoring in the boulder had a natural split and may have been a split stone cairn prior to it being quarried for a utilitarian purpose suggests the site may predate the quarrying episode. Predating the quarrying simply places the site as being in existence prior to 1820 and does not denote it is a pre-contact site.

Field sketch by James Gage  
9-19-2020

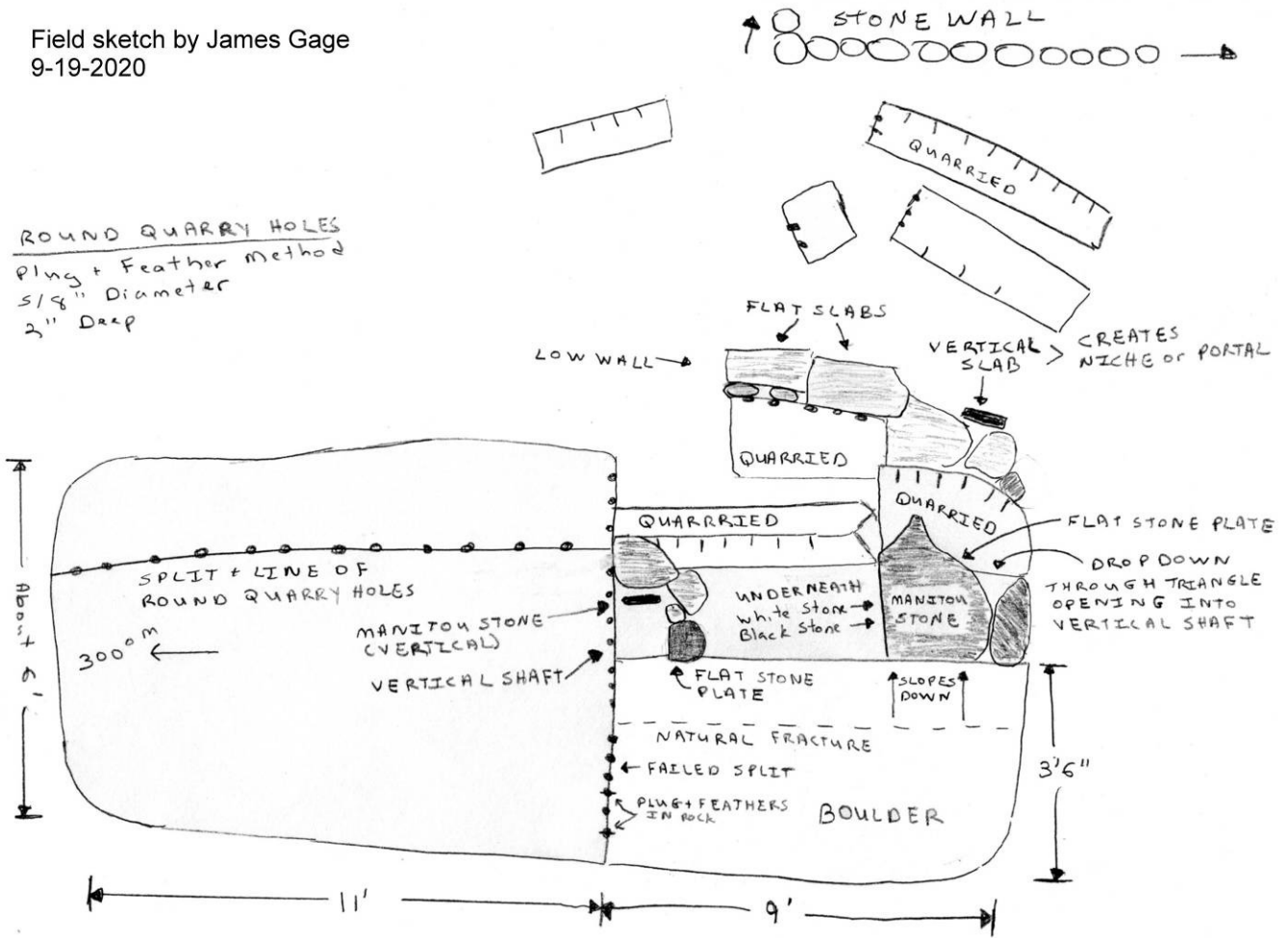
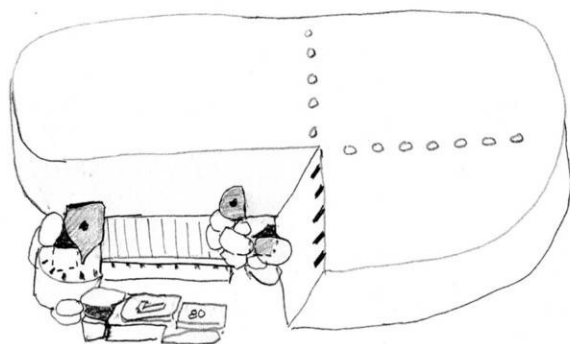


Figure 75 – Field sketch of quarried boulder used as a ceremonial enclosure. Acton, MA

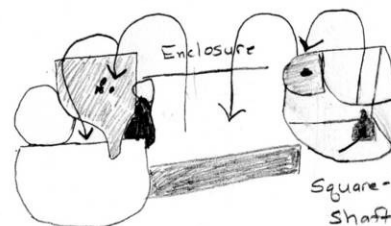


## How enclosure and shafts/vertical spirit portals function



② Inside enclosure spirit interacts with person during ceremony - Communication between spirit and person

③ At end of ceremony tobacco placed on top of manitou stone-plate, spirit recognizes the shape. This directs spirit back into Underworld via triangle shaped opening <sup>that</sup> show the spirit this is a different spirit portal set up purposely so it can freely descend into Underworld.



Triangular Opening to shaft with Manitou Stone on top  
Black and White Stone exposed to interior of enclosure

Square-Round Shaft with Manitou stone inside

① Spirit called up from Underworld to Manitou Stone or Spirit resides in Manitou Stone between ceremonies

Tobacco offering on top stone plate calls spirit out of Underworld and into enclosure

Drawing by  
Mary Gage  
9/24/20

Figure 76 – How the enclosure and shafts functioned



Figure 77 – Photo shows a straight on shot of the face of split with half round holes  
Photo courtesy of Dan Boudillion





Figure 78 – Quarried bar with holes

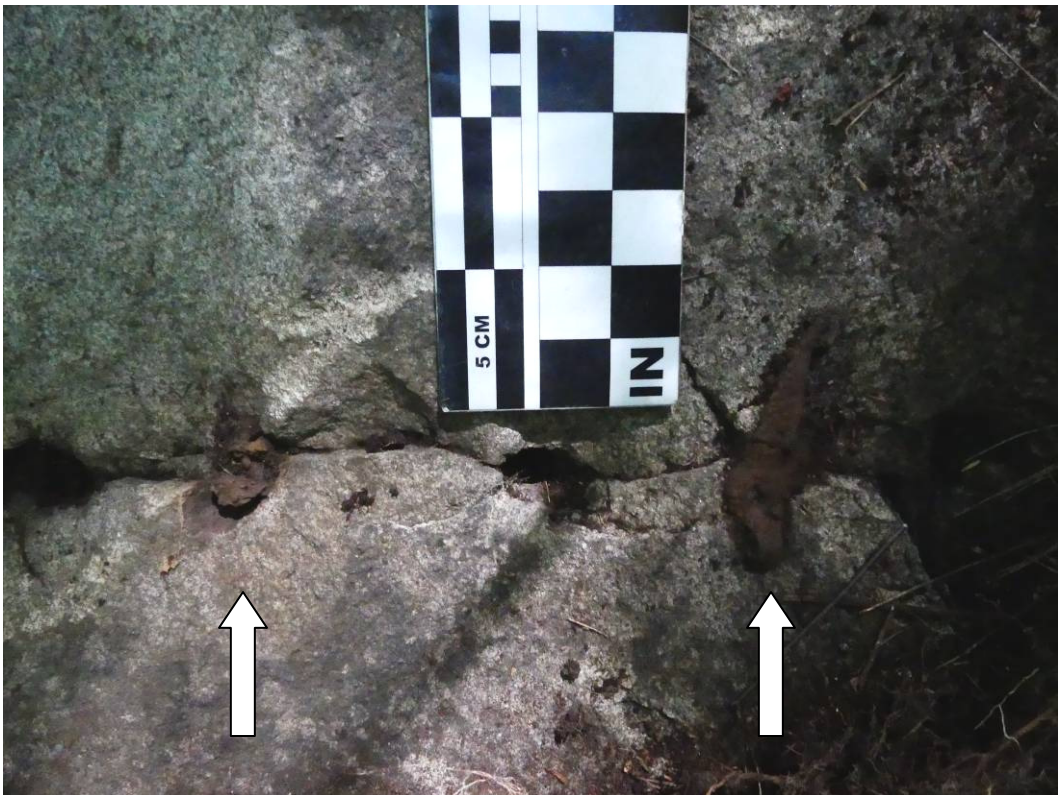


Figure 79 – Plug n’ feathers stuck in the boulder





Figure 80 – Quarry holes across width of boulder





Figure 81 – Inner shaft



Figure 82 – Manitou stone inside shaft





Figure 83 – Stone plate on top of shaft



Figure 84 – Manitou stone laid flat covering the other shaft with open triangle shape





Figure 85 – Side of closed shaft



Figure 86 – (A) primary enclosure (B) secondary enclosure





Figure 87 – Niche feature



Figure 88 – Niche feature (top down view)



## *Interpretation*

The enclosure utilized a natural split boulder that prior to its being quarried had a spirit portal. In turn, the man-made enclosure created inside it made it possible for a person to be physically inside the Underworld with a spirit.

The ceremony had two parts: a preparation ritual that took place in the outer secondary enclosure that may have included the exterior niche or spirit portal next to it. The second part was the main ceremony that took place inside the main enclosure. First the spiritual leader entered the enclosure. Next he/she placed a perishable offering on the stone plate on top the inner open shaft, a spirit portal to the Underworld. Within the shaft was a Manitou Stone containing the spirit. The spirit was called “out” of the portal where it came in contact with the person. This ceremony’s focus was on the Underworld and likely involved Master Spirit of Underworld. At the conclusion of the ceremony a second perishable offering was placed on top the Manitou Stone covering the closed shaft but leaving a small opening. That directed the spirit to go back “in” to the Underworld.

This site has not been extensively explored or documented unlike the Sandown, NH site. So it is unknown if this was strictly an Underworld Ceremony or if the ceremony involved another spirit like the Sun Spirit. A pure Underworld Ceremony was documented in Newbury, MA and is presented in the next part of the “Out & In” section.

A few towns removed in Ashburnham, Massachusetts is a Manitou Stone linked to a split stone cairn (see Manitou Stone & Split Stone Cairn – Spirit Portal). This site in Acton, MA is the second of two confirmed sites with Manitou Stones in the local area. The two sites are within the same geographical region of north-central Massachusetts.

### Out & In: Multiple Structure

This facet of the Out & In deals with multiple inter-related stone cairns and/or features.

#### ***Four Structure Unit - Newbury, MA***

Four individual cairns spread out across the site were arranged to function as a unit. The four were part of a larger group of cairns.

##### **#1- Split Stone Cairn with a Double Split**

Base stone is an elongated outcrop with an exposed face and top that is level with the ground. It contains two splits. One split is filled with three large stones on the surface. The second split is filled with medium size stones and has a single large stone at its bottom. Across the top surface of the outcrop is a thick layer of small stones ranging from 2” long up 6” long. Mixed in with the small stones is a partial brick. The large quantity of small stones indicates this was a community cairn in which everyone attending the ceremony made a stone offering.



Figure 89 – Double split outcrop – Split Stone Cairn



Figure 90 – Close-up





Figure 91 – The cairn has a large number of small stones (less than 4 inches in length)



Figure 92 – A brick amongst the stones in the cairn (historic period offering)



#2- Cairn attached to a boulder contains a standing stone with a U shaped top opening.

The boulder is naturally aligned with the split outcrop and a pseudo split stone cairn in the middle of the site. Stones attached to the end nearest the double split outcrop were used to hold the U shaped topped standing stone upright. The attached stones continue along its side to the opposite end. The U shaped standing stone is a directional spirit portal used to guide a spirit on the correct trajectory.



Figure 93 – Cairn attached to boulder with standing stone with U-shaped top opening.



Figure 94 – Close-up of U –shaped opening



#3- Pseudo split stone cairn is situated in the middle of the site next to a large open area.

The base stone is low to the ground and has a V indentation along its length filled with stones. Inside are four medium-large thin stones and five smaller thin stones. The thin aspect fits with the shape of the indentation. The split does not go through the stone hence, it is a pseudo split.



Figure 95 – V indentation serves as pseudo split in this cairn



#### #4- Split stone cairn

Nearby is a third split stone cairn. It has a single split containing two stones inside and three stones on top. This split stone cairn is radically different from the split outcrop with the large quantity of stones.



Figure 96 – Split stone cairn



Figure 97 – Top down view of same cairn showing three stones on top



*Interpretation*

The double split outcrop is the first in line on the outer edge of the site. Next comes the cairn with the U shaped spirit portal. The arrangement indicates the spirit came “out” of the Underworld spirit portal and traveled over to the U shaped topped standing stone. That spirit portal guided the spirit over to the pseudo split stone cairn where it was contained during the ceremony. After the ceremony the spirit went back “in” to the Underworld via the third split stone cairn with two stones in the split.

This ceremony’s sole purpose was focused on the Master Spirit of Underworld. It was centered around the inter-related split stone cairns.

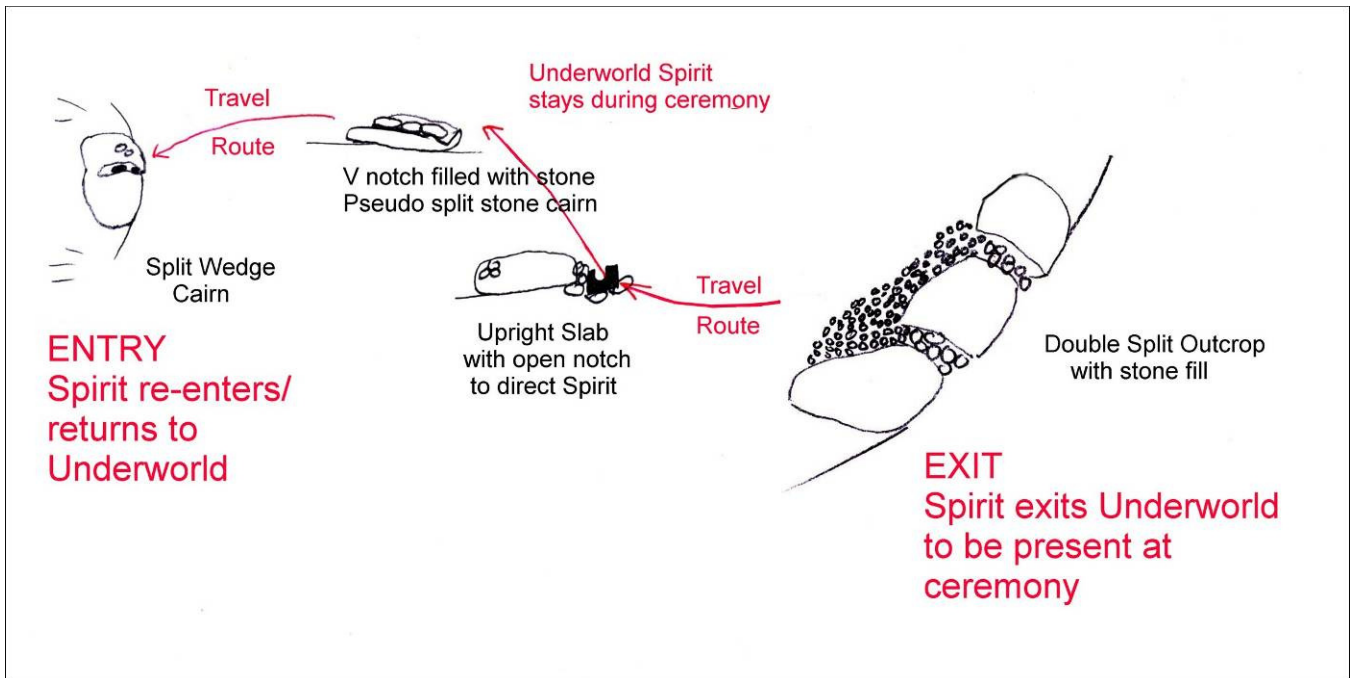


Figure 98 – Author’s interpretation of how the four structures functioned as a unit Newbury, MA.

## *America's Stonehenge, Salem, NH*

Half ways down the west side of the hill are three features that form a unit. The unit is one of a pair the other unit consists of two features at the bottom of the hill in the ravine. Together they make up a two part multi-structure unit. The unit is a small part of the greater whole known as the America's Stonehenge site with its hilltop complex of stone chambers.

**Unit #1:** Triangular standing stone (1' 10" High)

Split stone slab (3'W x 5'L x 6" Thick)

Niche: Slab propped up by a triangular support stone (roof slab 3'W x 4'L)

Location: On the downhill side of a low stone wall midway across the west side of the hill. The low wall connects the split-stone bedrock containing the three short standing stones on its southern end associated with the winter solstice ceremony with the top of the ledge face containing two shallow caves. Of which one is the small cave used as the template for the architecture of the stone structures within the hilltop complex. Unit #1 is about midway between the two connected features. (Area not open to the public)

The three features are spaced out over approximately 25 feet along a north-south line. The triangular standing stone is on the north end. The split stone slab is in the middle and lies flat on the ground. The split is an open crack completely through the slab stopping approximately in the middle. It is on the slab's west side and oriented to 28 degrees downhill. The niche is on the south end. Its open side faces west and downhill. Its triangular support stone is on its south side. That places a symbolic triangle on each end of the unit. Beyond each end are other ceremonial features utilized within the overall site.<sup>50</sup>

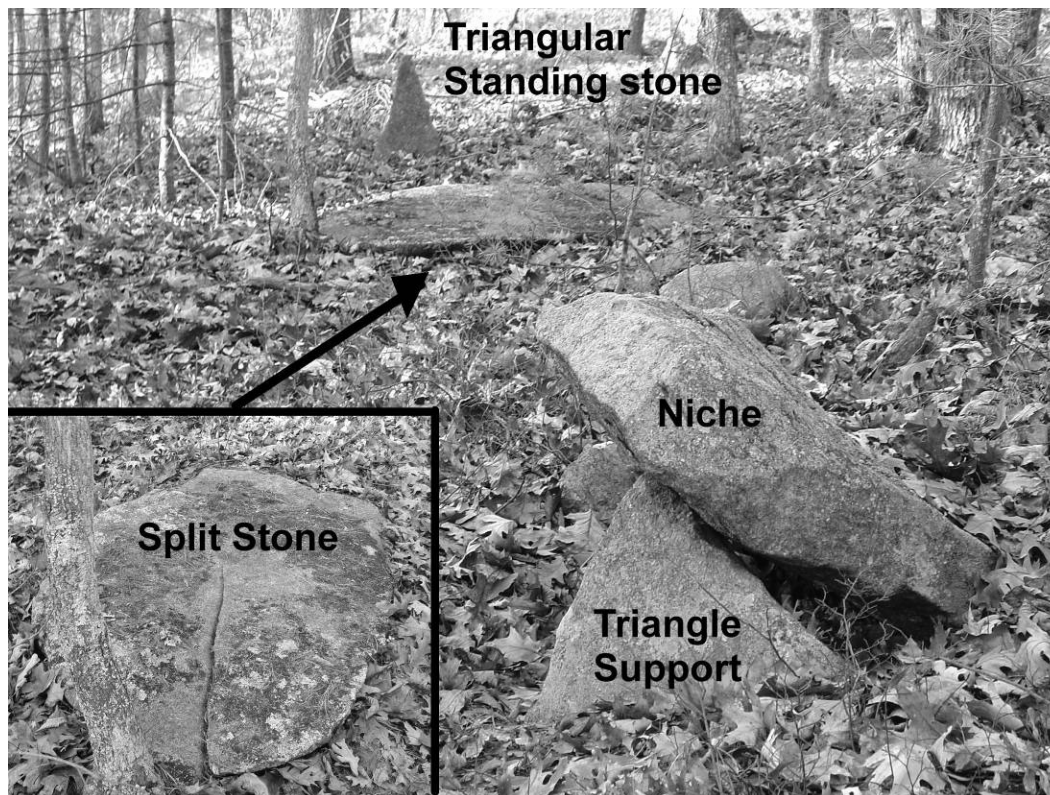


Figure 99 – Three structures make up unit #1. America's Stonehenge, Salem, NH.

<sup>50</sup> Gage 2021, 203-205.



**Unit #2: Triangular standing stone (2' 8" High)**

Split Boulder (Side #1- 2' H x 2' 10" W x 4' 6" L, Side #2- 2' H x 2' 4" W x 4' 6" L)

(Split – 8" W x 4' 6" L)

Location: At the base of the hill on the east side of the ravine. (Area not open to the public)

With this unit there was a long space between the two features. The triangular stone was on the north end. The split boulder was on the south end. No stones were inside the split. The split was aligned to 28 degrees. Beyond the triangular standing stone on the north side were more ceremonial features. There are no ceremonial features to its south. The split is oriented into the ravine.

Figure 100 – Starting at the split stone Unit #1, following a 28 degree compass heading (orientation of the split in the slab on the ground) brings one downhill to this split stone. The split in the boulder shown in the photo is also oriented 28 degrees. Normally an unmodified split stone is difficult to interpret as a culture feature. However, because it lines up with a feature in Unit #1, it can be considered a cultural feature. This is reinforced by the triangular standing stone 67 feet north of this split stone.



Figure 101 – Standing stone north of the split stone shown in fig. 100



Interpretation

*Closing Ceremony Ritual*

Unit #1 had a large split slab moved into the location. Lying flat on the ground the split, a spirit portal came in contact with the earth forming a direct contact with the Underworld. Next to it is a niche in which a perishable offering was placed during the ritual. The offering along with a song called the Master Spirit of Underworld “out” of the Underworld and directed it over to the niche. It entered the niche on the north side that was open and accepted the offering. To leave the niche the spirit had to go out the west side as the south side was blocked by the triangular support stone. To insure the spirit traveled on the correct trajectory (route) the split in the slab on the ground was aligned to the same orientation as the split in the boulder at the base of the hill, 28 degrees. (That was how the split boulder was located by the author.) In turn, the spirit was directed downhill to the ravine where a split boulder was located within its path. To insure the spirit did not wander north into another ceremonial area at the bottom of the hill a triangular standing stone was erected. The split boulder was used by the spirit to go back “in” to Underworld. The reason for returning Master Spirit of Underworld to the ravine was so it would be ready and waiting for the next year’s Summer Solstice ceremony in which it would again be called “out” of the Underworld to accompany the people along with Rainwater Spirit and Spring Water Spirit in a procession up to the hilltop complex.

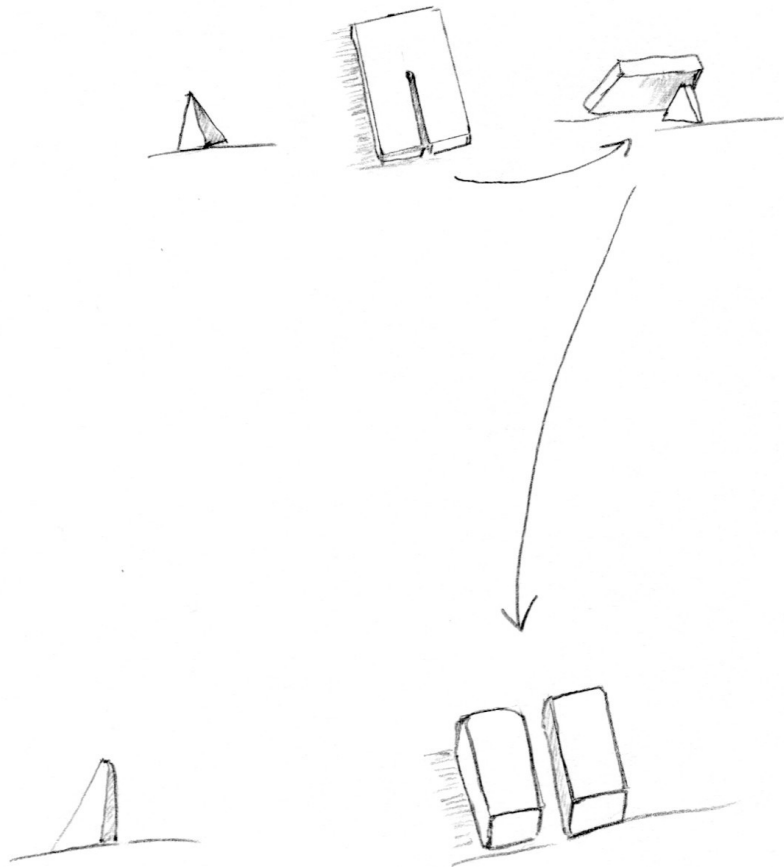


Figure 101A – Authors interpretation of how the ceremonial unit functioned.



America's Stonehenge has the most complete set of ceremonial stone structures ever erected. Originally their entrance on the Summer Solstice began at the ravine where features show three spirits entered the sacred hilltop with the people in a formal procession. Master Spirit of Underworld was called forth from Underworld via a split feature in the ledge on the west side of the ravine. The split feature was identified by two standing stones protruding above the split and a perfect flat triangle shaped slab deep inside the split underneath the standing stones. At the peak of the site's existence the Sun Spirit who was then residing in Upperworld was called "in" to the site/ceremony via the summer solstice sunrise alignment stone. At the end of the day Sun Spirit was returned to the sphere of the sun via the sunset alignment stone. Afterwhich, the Closing Ceremony Ritual took place returning Master Spirit of Underworld to the Underworld in the ravine.

For a complete write up on the equinox, summer solstice and winter solstice ceremonies please read the book *The Architecture of America's Stonehenge*.

## Conclusion

Split stones as documented in historic accounts are a spirit portal primarily to the Underworld. Spirits associated with split stones range from Master Spirit of Underworld to Sun Spirit, Serpent Spirit, Spring Water Spirit, animal spirits, spirits of fish, Little People, people (human) spirits both living and dead, and the “Blessed” Manitou a Christian based Master Spirit. Underworld was believed to be the opposite of Upperworld in the animals, plants and people, and in the seasons. In winter<sup>51</sup> Sun Spirit left Upperworld and went into Underworld and in summer the reverse took place. For Sun Spirit to travel from one world to another it needed a spirit portal, thus split stones are occasionally found used in conjunction with alignment stones. Most alignments are only partially expressed by stone structures like a pair of standing stones on the side of a hill in Ashburnham, Massachusetts. Standing between the two standing stones aligns a person to the winter solstice sunrise that appears on the distant horizon.<sup>52</sup> At the Gungywamp site in Groton, Connecticut a horizontal shaft in chamber no. 1’s wall extending from the exterior to interior channels a beam of light on the equinox sunset into a small interior chamber.<sup>53</sup> Chambers place people underground inside the Underworld. These examples show First Americans expressed basic beliefs in unique ways. Using historic accounts to acquire basic knowledge of a belief gives a researcher the means to explore the stone structures. Analyzing the split stone structures allows the researcher to figure out what they were used for.

Split stones were not the only entrances/portals to Underworld so were springs. Thus we see split stone cairns created in the head of a spring from time to time.

Making an offering to a spirit is the most common activity within the First American culture. It can be whiskey poured down a hole in a stone that leaves no trace to tobacco placed in a niche that also leaves no trace to stones placed in cairns that leave a permanent feature. When a niche is combined with a split stone it is evidence of a perishable offering to a spirit in the Underworld. When stone is placed in a split or on top of a split stone it is evidence of a spirit portal to the Underworld was activated. Large quantities of stone indicate stones were the preferred type of offering.

An effigy such as a serpent on top of a split stone cairn allows the researcher to identify the spirit involved with the ceremony. Investigating the historical records outside of the northeast and using them in conjunction with stone structures in the northeast that lack written accounts, the purpose of the serpent was uncovered which turned out to be complicated and complex yet relevant to the CSL and farms they are found integrated into. By the 1800s First Americans were moving about the country as much as Euro-Americans. In doing so, beliefs and ideas traveled from one region to another introducing new concepts to each other.

The study of split stone spirit portals and Underworld opened a door into what was once thought to be closed. Since most CSLs contain split stone cairns it is possible to establish the existence of a spirit associated with them and prove stone structures were used for ceremonial/religious purposes.

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<sup>51</sup> The winter solstice and fall equinox were both used to hold a ceremony in which the sun went into the Underworld for the cold weather months. At America’s Stonehenge in New Hampshire the ceremony was held on the winter solstice using an alignment stone in conjunction with a split stone. At Gungywamp in Connecticut the ceremony was held on the fall equinox using a stone chamber with a light tube directing a beam of sunlight into the entrance of a small dark secondary interior chamber.

<sup>52</sup> Gage 2013.

<sup>53</sup> Barron & Mason 1994, 9.



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