

Why Do Historic Farms Have Ceremonial Sites?

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INTRODUCTION

While documenting ceremonial stone structure sites it was noticed many are located on old farms. Some sites have ceremonial structures integrated in to farm walls. That proved some of the sites were built by Native American farmers. But it raised the question, why?

Structure documentation done by Steve DiMarzo in 2017 and 2018 on Jonathan Foster's farm in Hopkinton, Rhode Island proved it was the ideal site to study (Stephen DiMarzo, Jr., personal communication). It contained three common themes in southern New England ceremonies: Rain, Serpent and Underworld. It also contained immature and mature versions of the Open-End/Closed-End cairn design, which is local to Rhode Island. In addition, research for the book *Land of a Thousand Cairns* (Gage and Gage 2017), which focused on the site of his son Lawton Foster the younger, provided historical background data on Jonathan Foster. Further research was done through anthropological literature on the indigenous ceremonies to see if there was any relationship to farming. This produced some interesting results.

NATIVE FARMERS, SEX, SUN & UNDERWORLD

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 cult of the Snake people and other northern clans which settled the Hopi towns before the Patki came emphasizes ancestor worship, sky and earth playing a subordinate role in its ceremony. ... Among the southern clans agriculture had become the main occupation in the food quest long before they came to Hopiland, and with them prayers were made directly to the sky and earth as powers that cause the crops to grow" (Fewkes 1920: 496).

Fewkes theorized the non-farming northern tribes, early settlers of the Hopi lands, had little interest in sky (sun) and earth (underworld) worship, as they were not reliant on them for their food. In comparison the later Patki, who were farmers, had a high reliance on the sun and earth for their corn.

"It has been found that the former event [summer solstice] is directly connected with the advent of the rainy season, and the latter [winter solstice] marks when the sun reaches his most distant point to the south, at a time when the great cold intensifies the growing fear of the people that he [Sun Spirit] is about to depart from the earth never to return. The departure of the being to whom the farmer owes his crops must be prevented, he must be compelled to turn back, or as poetically expressed, the malign influences of the winter – personated by a hostile being – must be offset that the Sky god may return" (Ibid).

This accounts for the inclusion of solar alignments in regards to farming.

“The seed corn must be planted, for it does not grow save in the earth. There is a power in the earth that makes corn sprout, but this power is connected with that of the sky. In other words, there are two cosmic agencies that appeal to the farmers – the sky and the earth.”

“It would certainly be logical to ascribe growth and fructification of crops to rain, since when water failed the growing plants withered and yielded no harvest. The heat of the sun was naturally associated with fructification, for the seed buried in the earth would not grow without a warm earth, and the sun warmed the earth. What more natural than to suppose that the analogy of the birth of life from male and female elements existed in all nature, and to associate sex with these two great magic powers of nature – the sun with the male and the earth with the female element” (Fewkes, op. cit: 493-4).

The sun is therefore representative of the Upperworld and earth represents the Underworld. Thus, evidence of sun, rain and Underworld ceremonies should be expected to be found on historic Native American farm ceremonial sites.

JONATHAN FOSTER FARM

In April 1814, Joseph and Thomas Brightman acquired a fifty-acre lot of wooded, rocky land from their uncle. The purchase coincided with Joseph's marriage to Patience Kinyon. Joseph and Patience likely lived on the property for 16 months before his untimely death in December 1815, leaving Patience with a young daughter to care for. His modest probate inventory included corn, potatoes, onions, apples, eight sheep, a piglet, and a one-year-old cow. No farming tools like a plow were listed, suggesting the crops came from a kitchen garden. The apples were likely from his father's orchard, and the livestock may have been pastured on his father's land as well. A loom listed in the inventory suggests Joseph was a weaver by trade. They had a homestead only in the very initial stage of development.

Patience purchased Thomas's half interest in the property after Joseph's death. In 1818, she married Jonathan Foster (1800-1869) who was 18 years old. Jonathan built a large house with a double cellar, a substantial barn, and eventually a saw mill on the fifty-acre lot (Figure 1). He walled in a number of sheep pastures. In addition to farming and running a saw mill, Jonathan was a butcher and his probate inventory listed shoe making tools. He operated the farm till his death in 1869, when the farm passed to his widowed daughter Samantha. Jonathan was responsible for the remains of the farm seen today (Gage and Gage 2017: 14-19).

Were the Fosters Native American?

The identification of the three generations of Foster (Lawton Foster the elder, his son Jonathan, and his grandson Lawton the younger) as Native American is based upon the presence of ceremonial structures on each of their farms, which were contemporary with their farming activities. The Fosters were identified in censuses and other records as white. However, it was common practice for Native Peoples to hide their ethnic identity to avoid discrimination.

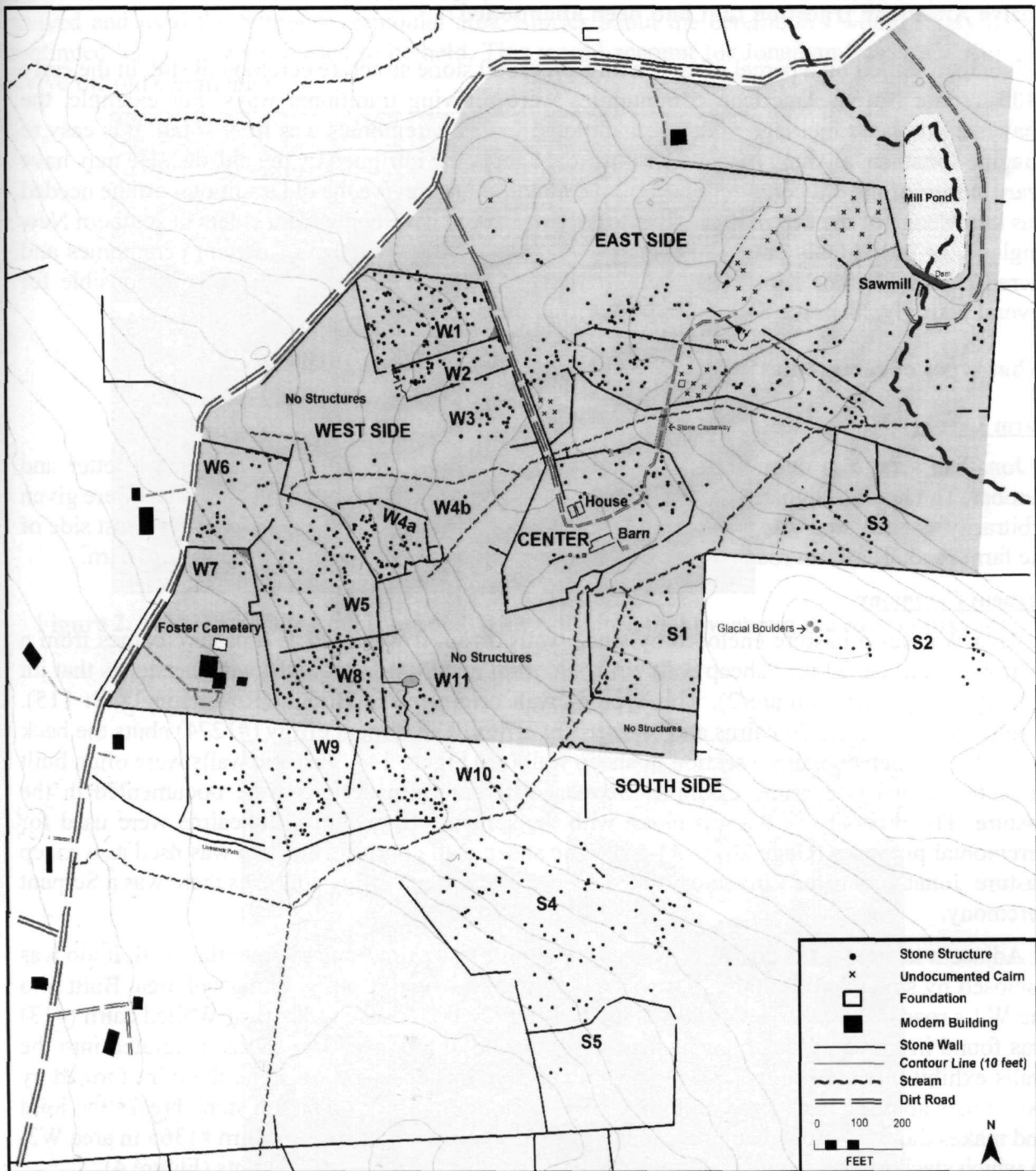


Figure 1. Map showing the wall layout, stream and structures on the Jonathan Foster Farm. Each dot represents a ceremonial stone structure (over 800 documented). Light gray indicates the boundaries of the 50-acre farm.

How did Jonathan Foster an 18-year-old, newly married man in 1818, come to revive a Native American tradition that had been abandoned?

Jonathan settled on a parcel of land with a pre-1800 stone structure ceremonial site. In the early 1800s, some Native American communities were reviving traditional ways. For example, the Shawnee Prophet's message to revive traditional Indian ceremonies was flourishing. It is easy to imagine Jonathan, a young man at an influential age, being intrigued by the old site. He may have heard stories of the old ceremonies -- optimal conditions to revive the old traditions. All he needed was knowledge of the ceremonies. That knowledge could have come from elders in southern New England, or individuals entrusted with safe guarding the knowledge of certain ceremonies and sacred places (Author's interview with a Native American informant who was responsible for several petroglyphs in the Sanbornton, New Hampshire area).

What types of ceremonies did Jonathan Foster find on his land?

Farm Layout

Jonathan's farm is delineated by walled-in areas (1). Each area was assigned a letter and number. The letter designates the compass location (W= West). Numbers (1, 2, 3, etc.) were given arbitrarily as each area was documented. W1 represents the first enclosed area on the west side of the farm road. The farm road runs through the middle to the center with the house and barn.

Serpent Ceremony

Area W1 was a pasture enclosed by stone walls. Proof it was used as a pasture comes from a section of wall called the "sheep wall". A sheep wall is tall (4-5 feet high) with capstones that jut out into the pasture (Figure 2). This type of wall originated in Britain (Robertson 1813: 115). Within the pasture are 76 cairns and one serpent effigy. The serpent effigy (#1274) abuts the back stone wall, which contains a section of sheep wall (see Figure 14). Historic walls were often built in sections; this is a prime example. Sixteen different cairn designs were documented in the pasture. The diversity of designs along with the serpent effigy shows the cairns were used for ceremonial purposes (Gage 2016: 33-50). The sheep wall confirms the area was used as a sheep pasture. Jonathan Foster's inventory listed sheep. The serpent effigy confirms there was a Serpent ceremony.

Adjacent to area W1 is area W2. This area contained 19 cairns, and a serpentine wall. It too was enclosed by stone walls, although it was much smaller being a narrow elongated area. Built into the W2's roadside wall is a Vertical Walled cairn (#1698). A second Vertical Walled cairn (#13) was found in the long length enclosing the south side of the area. The cairns integrated into the walls exhibit historic European-style construction. In this construction style, the joint formed by two stones abutting is covered on top by another stone (Figure 3). The top stone breaks the joint and makes the wall strong. Compare to the pre-1800 construction style of cairn #1365 in area W3, in which stacking of several stones one on top of another creates vertical joints (Figure 4).

Areas W2 and W3 confirm two different time periods: pre-1800 and post-1800. Pre-1800 likely extended into the early Euro-American historic period, indicated by the use of pre-European style vertical walls in the cairns. Post-1800 settlement of this 50-acre lot began in 1818 when Jonathan Foster established his farm. Area W2 with its integrated cairns exhibiting historic style construction and area W1 with the sheep wall section indicate some of the walls on the farm were constructed during Jonathan Foster's ownership. Post-1800 period cairns with vertical walls

integrated into the same area that contained pre-1800 cairns with vertical walls shows Jonathan revived and used the Serpent ceremonial area. Stories about the ceremonies would likely have continued long after they ceased to be held. This would account for Jonathan Foster's ability to revive the old ceremonies.

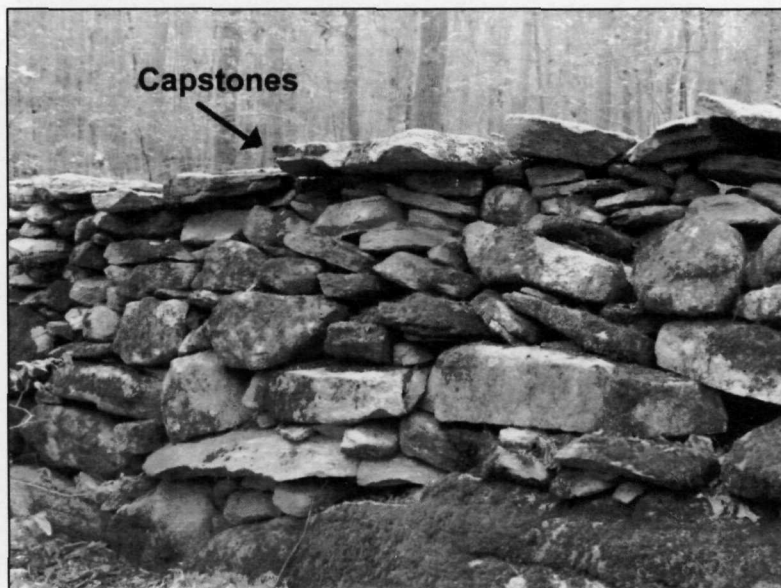


Figure 2. A sheep wall is a tall stone wall with capstones that overhang the edge to prevent sheep from jumping the wall.



Figure 3. The vertical wall of this cairn exhibits Euro-American style construction in which one stone covers the joint of the two stones below it (#1698, West Side – Jonathan Foster Farm).



Figure 4. This pre-1800 cairn exhibits slanted stone stacks that create vertical joints (#1365, West Side – Jonathan Foster Farm).

His father Lawton Foster the elder's farm (1807 - 1842) had ceremonial structures that post-dated those at Jonathan's farm (Gage and Gage 2017: 142). This indicates he followed his son's initiative, and that the ceremonies were not an uninterrupted continuation from pre-1800 to post-1800. It suggests Lawton Foster the elder's generation and his father's generation (Jonathan's grandfather) were no longer practicing the ceremonies; thus they had faded out at least two generations back. Lawton Foster the elder appears to have revived a winter ceremony that included a winter solstice alignment. This was not seen on Jonathan's farm, thus indicating his father was able to obtain knowledge likewise of an older ceremony.

Water Ceremony

Jonathan's farm is bisected by a major rocky wetland with two streams (Figure 5). The two streams converge into a single stream near the center, flowing from the far west side down through the east side to a north-south oriented stream. The northernmost west to east stream delineates the Water ceremonial area from the Serpent ceremonial area.

Area W4 contains a large enclosure (#1422) attached to the exterior wall of area W5. The enclosure's wall abuts the southernmost west to east stream. That brings in the water component along with the fact that area W4 is situated between the two streams. Area W5 has two interesting features along with numerous cairns of diverse designs. The first is a niche built into the base of a post-1800 stone wall. The second is a niche/spirit portal built into the entrance (Figure 6). It is a simple arrangement of stones that attaches to the end of the stone wall but is not integrated into it.

The wall entry between areas W6 and W7 has another niche/spirit portal (Figure 7). This niche/spirit portal was integrated into the finished end of a post-1800 wall. It has a flat end face, level top, and forms part of the wall. Area W7 also has a section of sheep wall on its north side. This creates a cross-check, showing some of the stone walls on the west side were built in the post-1800 period. (This property was initially homesteaded beginning in 1814, which dates the sheep

walls to 1814 or later – see Gage and Gage 2017: 14.) The construction techniques of the two niche/spirit portal features suggest the one in area W5 was from the pre-1800 period and the one between W6 & W7 was from the post-1800 period. The use of the same feature in abutting areas indicates a link between the three areas. Here again, there is an intermixing of pre-1800 and post-1800 structures within the same ceremonial area. And again, it shows Jonathan revived the older Water ceremony.



Figure 5. Parts of Jonathan Foster’s farm are characterized by rocky wetlands unsuitable for farming.



Figure 6. Niche/spirit portal at end of stone wall but not integrated into it (#1393, West Side – Jonathan Foster Farm).



Figure 7. Niche/spirit portal integrated into the end of a post-1800 stone wall (#1453, West Side – Jonathan Foster Farm).



Figure 8. Early version of the open-end/closed-end cairn design. Photo shows one of two ends with slanted stacks (#1620, West Side – Jonathan Foster Farm).

Development of the Open-End/Closed-End Cairn design

A couple of walled-in areas south of the Water ceremony are areas W9 and W10. In W9 there is an early version of the Open-End/Closed-End Cairn design (Figure 8). The cairn has two ends with a mound in the middle. One end is a pile of extra large boulders. The opposite end is a crude vertical wall. This early example of the OE/CE design had two ends. In comparison, the mature OE/CE cairn design had a vertical front wall with a slanted mound behind it. Eight different versions of the OE/CE cairn were confirmed. Pre-1800 OE/CE cairns were identified by the slanted stacks in their vertical walls (Figure 9). Figure 10 has a drawing of each example.

- (1) #1620 – Two ends (vertical walled & boulders piled up) with a mound extending perpendicular between the ends (Figure 8).
- (2) #1350 – Two ends consisting of extra large boulders with large stones resembling a vertical wall between them and a mound on the opposite side.
- (3) #1713 – A row of extra-large boulders with a mound attached on the ground.
- (4) #1365 – One extra-large end boulder with two side walls: vertical wall and rubble wall. The walls fan out in a V shape with a mound in the middle (Figure 4).
- (5) #1413 – A stacked pile of stones on top of a low boulder with a slanted mound attached.
- (6) #1175 – A vertical wall with a slanted mound behind it built on the ground.
- (7) #1714 – Two ends (boulder & stack) with four vertical walls surrounding the cairn with the exception of a narrow opening with small stones coming out. Interior is filled with small stones.
- (8) #1716 – Vertical wall front with slanted mound inside on top of a boulder. This is the mature version that was carried over into the 1800s.

The short crude vertical wall in cairn #1620 contains two sets of stacked stones. The example shown in Figure 8 shows two side by side slanted stacks embedded in the wall. Compare with Open-End/Closed-End Cairn #1365 in area W3. It, too, has the same type of double slanted stacks in its vertical wall shown in Figure 8. The difference is cairn #1365 (Figure 4) has a well-developed vertical wall (closed-end) but is not yet a mature design. It is V-shaped with a single extra-large boulder on the end, a vertical walled side and a rubble wall side. The examples show the same slanted stacking construction technique was used in both cairns, which appear to have been built years apart.

Another set of slanted stacked stones showed up in a stone wall near a corner junction (Figure 9). In that junction is a corner wall cairn (#1465) without a front vertical wall, indicating it is a pre-1800 design. This suggests the pre-1800 builders were building stone walls and possibly had a small farm on the property.

What is interesting is the slanted stacks of stones have held up over the years. By creating slanted stacks, although they formed vertical joints, the joints were not straight up and down, which makes a wall weak. The slanted joints partially interlocked with other stones and thus created a stable wall construction that has held up for centuries.

Several pre-1800 OE/CE cairns contained double ends: #1620 (vertical wall & pile of boulders), #1350 (two boulders), and #1714 (boulder & stack of stones). Cairn #1365's vertical wall was

recessed. Both of these characteristics showed up in Jonathan Foster's cairn #1 (Figures 10 & 11). His cairn was constructed between two tall outcrops forming two ends. Its flat faced surface is recessed. The cairn is double-walled with stone fill inside. The design was Jonathan's but it was fashioned after early OE/CEs on his farm. This shows he had good knowledge of the makeup of the pre-1800 cairns.

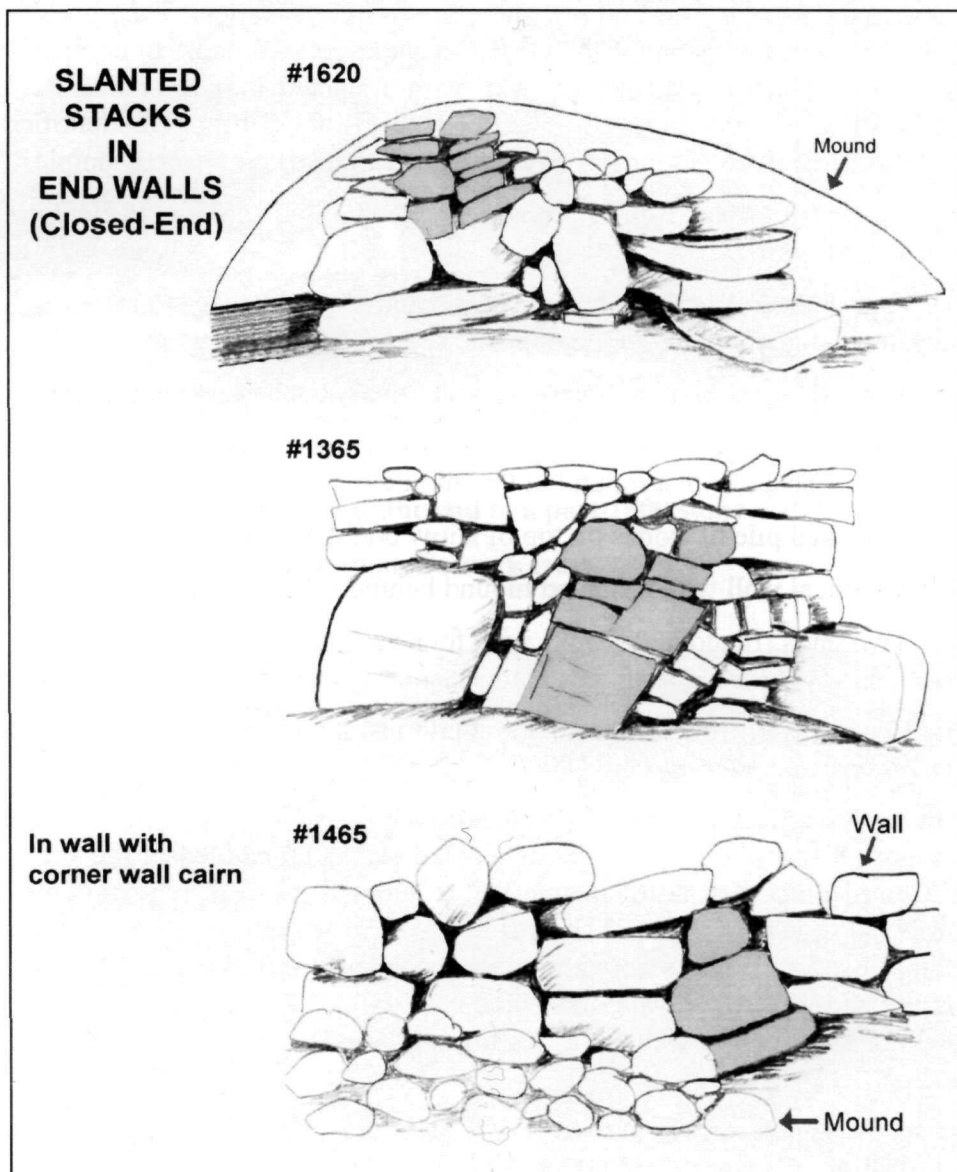


Figure 9. Three examples of pre-1800 cairns with slanted stack construction.

His father, Lawton Foster the elder, built an extra-large OE/CE cairn (#11) on his farm (Gage and Gage 2017: 59). It is a larger version of one of the earlier pre-1800 designs on Jonathan's farm (#1714, Figure 10). The two cairns are rectangular in shape, with tall walls, a base boulder, and a narrow opening with the slanted mound spilling out.

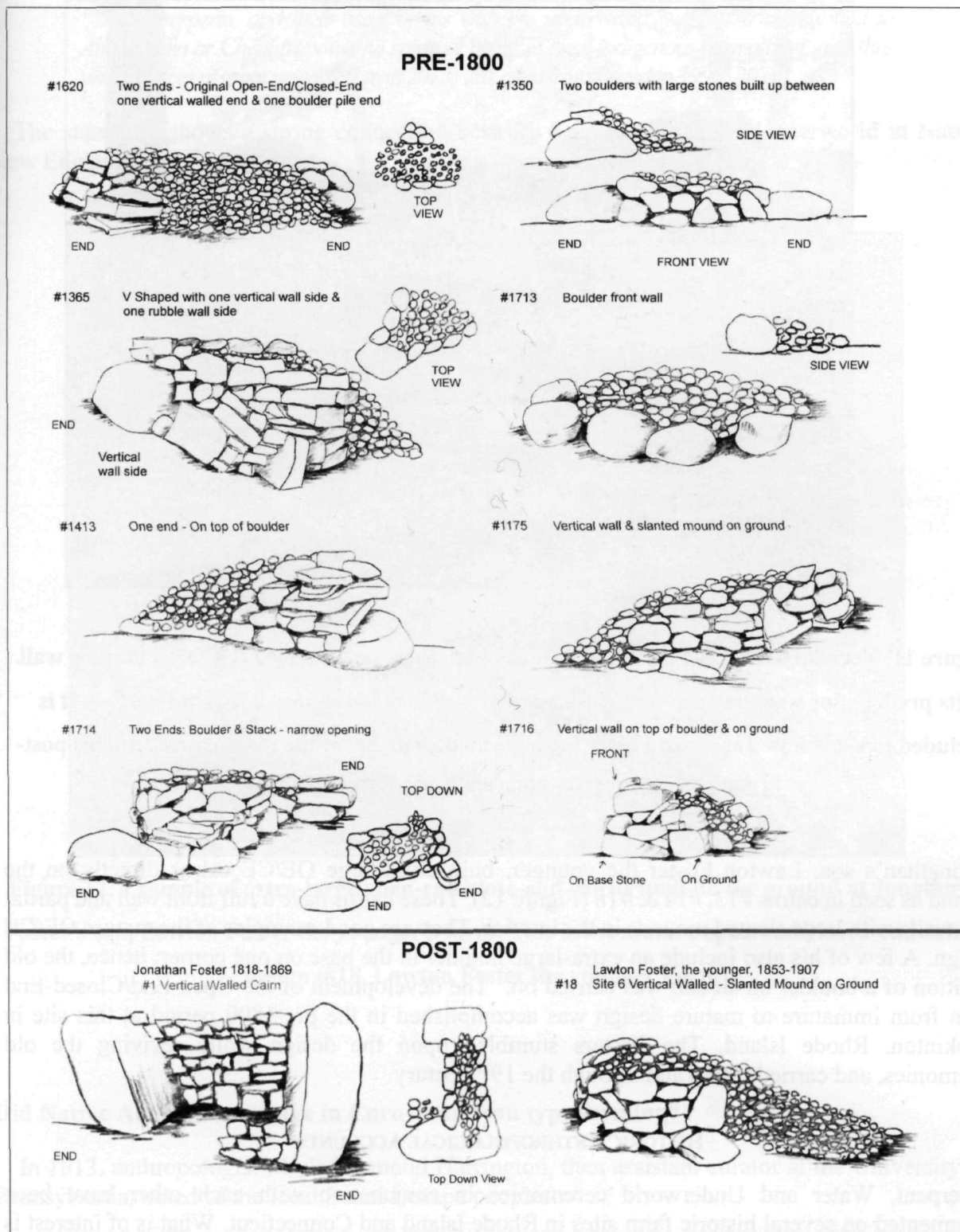


Figure 10. Eight different version of the open-end/close-end cairn designs have been confirmed at the Foster Farm sites.



Figure 11. Vertical walled cairn with double boulder ends and recessed flat faced vertical wall. Its predecessor was the open-end/closed-end pre-1800 cairn #1365 shown in Figure 4. It is included to show how Jonathan Foster incorporated elements of the older cairns into his post-1800 cairns (#1, East Side – Jonathan Foster Farm).

Jonathan's son, Lawton Foster the younger, built extra-large OE/CE cairns directly on the ground as seen in cairns #13, #14 & #18 (Figure 12). These cairns have a full front wall and partial side walls with large slanted mounds in the interior. They are good examples of the mature OE/CE design. A few of his also include an extra-large boulder in the base on one corner; hence, the old tradition of a boulder on an end was carried on. The development of the Open-End/Closed-End cairn from immature to mature design was accomplished in the pre-1800 period at this site in Hopkinton, Rhode Island. The Fosters stumbled upon the design while reviving the old ceremonies, and carried it into and through the 19th century.

HISTORIC ANTHROPOLOGICAL ACCOUNTS

Serpent, Water and Underworld ceremonies in conjunction with each other have been documented on several historic farm sites in Rhode Island and Connecticut. What is of interest is a reference in Lucianne Lavin's book *Connecticut's Indigenous Peoples*, in which she quoted anthropologist Dr. Kathleen Bragdon, who observed the same combination in early post-colonial Native American cosmology:

“Water, serpents, and their associations with the underworld, were also closely tied to Abbomocho or Chepi [a powerful spiritual being in local indigenous cosmology], and thus were sources of great power” (Lavin 2013: 281 cited from Bragdon 1996: 207).

The statement shows a strong connection between serpent, water and Underworld in Native New England.



Figure 12. Example of extra-large open-end/close-end cairns built on the ground at Jonathan Foster’s son, Lawton Foster the younger’s farm. This is the mature open-end/closed-end cairn design (#18, Lawton Foster the younger Farm).

Did Native Americans engage in Euro-American type farming?

In 1913, anthropologist Mark Raymond Harrington, then assistant curator at the University of Pennsylvania, noted of the local Lenni Lenape peoples:

“It must be understood, in conclusion, that the Delawares [Lenape] now [1913] live in frame and log houses fully as well appointed, as a rule, as those of the surrounding whites, and engage in the modern form of farming and in other occupations like their neighbors” (M.R. Harrington 1913: 235).

Is there any anthropological evidence of ceremonies or rituals related to historic agriculture?

The following accounts were found involving late 19th and early 20th century farming. The first account by Harrington combines data from research done on the Lenape living in Ontario, Canada and Oklahoma.

"They contain, in smaller deerskin bags, a finely divided shining substance resembling mica, which was, according to Indian belief, taken from the scales of the great mythical Horned Serpent, and constitutes a very powerful 'rain medicine'. They say it is necessary only to expose a few of the 'scales' on a rock beside some stream to make the black thunder-clouds rise and refresh the thirsty corn-fields with rain. The explanation is found among the legends of the Lenape, which relate the violent hatred between the Thunder Beings and the water monsters. If a horned Serpent as much as shows his head above the water, clouds will arise bearing the Thunder Beings to attack him. Hence the belief that even part of a Horned Serpent will draw the thunder-clouds" (Harrington 1913, 226).

The following information was collected by Fewkes between 1890 and 1894.

"In almost every Hopi sheep corral there is a place where clay images of the animal are placed as prayers for the increase of domestic animals" (Fewkes 1906: 369-370).

For farmers everywhere rain and production are basic needs of farming. The Lenape lived in a region where rain was plentiful yet they held a ceremony to insure that the rain came for their corn. The Hopi in the southwest were sheep farmers who like any farmer wanted their herds to grow in size. These tribes show there was a common practice of incorporating ceremonies into farming among Native Americans throughout the United States.

WHY BUILD A CEREMONIAL SITE ON A FARM?

Survival! In the pre-contact period, Native Peoples relied on ceremonies and prayers to the spirits that controlled the abundance of game animals, medicine plants, berries, the rains, and warmth of the sun to insure they had a bountiful harvest and success in the hunt. These traditional ceremonies were adaptable to farming, which supplied their plant harvest and meat needs. It was still about basic survival needs whether it was a deer or pig, corn or wheat. The fertility of the livestock and success of the crops continued to be dependent upon the good will of the spirits that controlled the animals, plants, rains, sun, storms, and other natural forces. Jonathan Foster even integrated a ceremony into his saw mill operation on his farm.

WHAT TYPES OF CEREMONIAL SITES OCCUR ON FARMS?

The data comes from the Miner farm and three former Foster farms in Hopkinton, Rhode Island, and from the Cam farm in Shelton, Connecticut. The ceremonies represented at these farmsteads are: Serpent, Rain/Water, Solar, and Underworld (Gage & Gage 2017: 211-216).

Serpent Ceremonies

The Miner farm in Hopkinton RI has a serpent effigy in wetlands where it comes in contact with water. The Cam farm has a serpent effigy lifting its head up on a high dry area (Figure 13). Jonathan Foster's farm has a serpent effigy emerging from a stone wall (Figure 14). His farm also has a low serpentine wall with an entry into a restricted area with small enclosures. Lawton Foster the younger's farm has a serpent effigy integrated into the end of a pasture wall on a dry hillside and another low serpentine wall forming an enclosure in a wetland area where it comes in contact with water (Figure 15).



Figure 13. Serpent effigy lifting its head up at the 19th century Cam Homestead Site in Shelton, Connecticut (Courtesy of Lucianne Lavin, Institute for American Indian Studies).

What do serpents have to do with farming?

The following quotes by Rev. Dr. Stephen D. Peet, founder of *American Antiquarian* and author of numerous works on North American archaeology and ethnography, describe Zuni mythology and their related rain ceremonies:

“The rain ceremonies generally consisted in a dramatization of the rain, under the figure of an immense snake, who is supposed to represent the rain-god and his efficiency in bringing the needed supply of water, as well as his influence over the different crops” (Peet 1905: 282).

“... the Sa-la-no-bi-ya should go to the north, west, south, east, the heavens and the earth, to procure cereals for the Zuni, and ordered that the [plumed] serpent should carry these with water to the Zunis (Ashisi), and tell them what to do with the seeds” (Peet 1905: 287).

This quote by anthropologist Dr. George Dorsey is based on the oral tradition of the Caddo, a southern Native American agriculturist society:

“The Great Father gave the seeds of all growing things to Snake-Woman. He taught her how to plant the seeds and how to care for the green things that grew from them until they were ripe, and then how to prepare them for food” (Dorsey 1905: 18).

In the Lenape quote cited above under the anthropological evidence of ceremonies related to agriculture, the “scales” of the serpent were used in conjunction with the stream water to bring the “black thunder-clouds” that produced rain. Anthropologist George Hamell and archaeologist William Fox showed a similar correlation between supernatural serpents and rain among Great Lakes Algonquian speakers:

“Among Great Lakes Native groups, the Horned Serpent was associated consistently with lightning in the context of its eternal conflict with the Thunderers” (Hamell and Fox 2005: 139).

“A lightning-rainfall association is expressed clearly in lore by Algonquian-speaking groups, such as the Chippewa/Ojibwa, Micmac, and Kickapoo” (Hamell and Fox 2005: 139).

Serpents, lightning, and rain were intertwined; they brought rain water. Serpents in the Zuni culture in addition to being associated with rain also brought seeds to the Natives. In the Caddoan culture, the Snake-Woman was the originator of seeds.



Figure 14. Serpent effigy emerging from a stone wall on the Jonathan Foster farm (#1274, West Side – Jonathan Foster Farm).



Figure 15. Low serpentine wall forming an enclosure in a wetlands area (#1019, Lawton Foster the younger Farm).

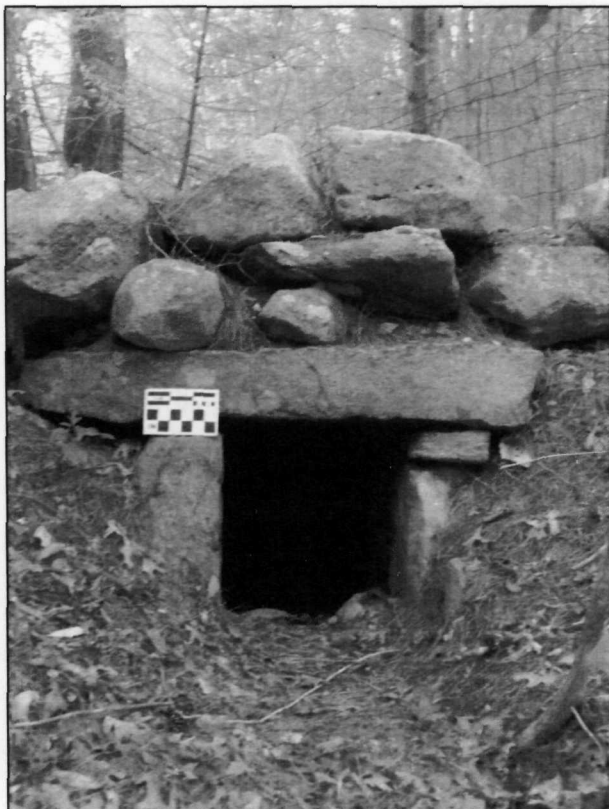


Figure 16. Small stone chamber with a winter solstice sunrise alignment on Lawton Foster the elder's farm.

Rain Water Ceremonies

On the Miner farm there is a stone wall with a widened-out section. In the middle of the wide section there is a large shaft that goes down to the ground. Springtime flooding in the field floods this area and engulfs the wide section and shaft. Thus, a person who enters the shaft during the ceremony comes in physical contact with the rain water (Author's 2017 field visit).

Jonathan Foster's farm has two separate areas dedicated to a rain water ceremony. They represent 1st period - West side and 2nd period -

East side versions. On the West side, a large ceremonial enclosure (#1422) abuts a spring time seasonal runoff stream. The stream is most active during spring rains. On the East side, a split wedge cairn (a split stone with a stone wedged into the split) (#5) was created in another stream. This stream appears to be fed by a natural spring. The cairn is associated with a small unit made up of a split stone with an enclosure attached. The stone wall of the enclosure extends down to another split stone filled with small stones (#3). The unit extends down to a ditch that carries rain water to the mill pond. The ditch is ceremonial, as it only siphons a small quantity of water during high water and then stops functioning while there is still water in the stream.

Rain Spirit or Rain-God

This statement from Dr. Stephen D. Peet concerning Zuni tradition is very informative:

"It appears that the rain-god was not only personated, but that all the operations of the rain were dramatized and imitated. The other nature powers, such as the lightning, the cloud, the colors of sky, the four points of the compass, even the sun and moon and stars [were] made subordinate to this [rain-god], and yet by their combination these set off the supremacy of the rain as a great divinity" (Peet 1905: 281).

Why hold a rain water ceremony?

Roger Williams, in his book *A Key into the Language of America*, noted of the southern New England tribal communities:

"If the yeere prove drie, they have great and solemne meetings from all parts at one high place, to supplicate their gods; and to beg raine, and they will continue in this worship ten days, a fortnight; yea, three weekes, until raine come" (Williams 1643: 67).

In their *Yurok Narratives*, Yurok leader Robert Spott and cultural anthropologist Dr. A.L. Kroeber cited this Yurok story told by Kerner, a Yurok elder from the village Pekwon:

"The winter moons are bastards. The sun is proud and will not travel with them; therefore he is alone in the daytime. Yet it is the bastard moons that bring the rains which make the growth in a good summer. So when I fasted and gathered sweatlodge wood, I cried out to the bastard moons as well as the others and they helped me" (Kerner, in Spott and Kroeber (1942), as cited by Buckley 2002: 213).

Ceremonies go through transitions to accommodate what each culture (as it is worldwide among all cultures) is experiencing at that time. Here is an example from Alanson Skinner, ethnologist at the National Museum of the American Indian in New York City, who worked with the "Menomini or Wild Rice People, a small tribe of Algonkin-speaking Indians who dwell on their reservation in Sahwano and Oconto Counties, Wisconsin, not far from their original habitat on Green Bay" (Skinner 1913: 3). Skinner described the traditional War Bundle Ceremony, and its modern counterpart:

"Before you go out to war you shall first prepare and give feasts to the war bundle. You shall sacrifice to it in behalf of the thunderbirds" (Ibid: 100).

"The semi-annual [war bundle] ceremonies are still held in the form of feasts ... This modern [1913] ceremony, and the rites of feeding and giving tobacco to the [war] bundles is to please the thunders so that they will continue to sweep the earth with the winds and scour it with rains, that it may be clean and habitable for mankind" (Ibid: 119).

In doing so, the Menomini transitioned the War Ceremony into a Rain & Wind Ceremony. The thunderbirds originally associated with war were retained and asked to bring rain. Rain is vital to survival.

Winter Solstice Ceremony

Lawton Foster the elder's farm has a small stone chamber aligned to the winter solstice, confirming a Winter Solstice Ceremony took place on his farm (Figure 16).

Why hold a solstice ceremony?

Two purposes showed up in the literature: (1) to mark the starting day of another ceremony and (2) for the sun to travel between Underworld and Upperworld.

Marking the Day

Marking the day a ceremony starts is enacted among the Yurok of northwestern California and the Zuni of Arizona. The Yurok's Jump Dance has a ceremonial sweat lodge. Inside is a circle with stone slates with incised marks and a small hole in the door. The setup is used to tell the exact day of solar and lunar events to plan the start of their ceremonies (Buckley 2002, 164-5). Similarly, the Zuni use a "sunpost" to determine the initiation of solstice ceremonies:

"III. The 'solstitial' ceremonies of the Zunis also represent the worship of the rain-god and dramatize the effect of the rain upon the corn crop. These have been described by Dr. J.W. Fewkes. He says: Both solstices are marked epochs in the Zuni calendar and are celebrated by appropriate ceremonials. 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 sunpost, which projects a few feet above the soil on the plain of Zuni, and then announces the time for the rain dances to begin" (Peet 1905: 288).

In both of these references, the solstice is viewed via a man-made object and was used to mark the beginning of a ceremony. These two very different cultures come from vastly different regions around a thousand miles apart. Yet they both use the same concept -- the solstice -- to mark the start of their ceremonies.

Sun Travel

This account comes from a Zuni Sun Ceremony held in the year 1900 at the Ancient Hano Sun Shrine. The shrine

"consists of a ring of stones a few feet in diameter, open on the east side.....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" (Fewkes 1906: 358).

In a 1920 article, Fewkes explained the purpose behind the sun ceremony:

“Each day its [sun’s] altitude at noon is less as its setting is more and more to the south; the sun is evidently slowly departing from the earth. When it reaches its distant southern point and sets behind the San Francisco mountains in the notch at Eldon Mesa, an official announcement is made through the town crier that the sun has descended into his house in the [south]west. This from experience they know is the time when a supreme effort must be made to offset the power which is driving him away from his children and then the priests must use all their magic medicine to cause the sun to return to his people. The sun’s efforts to return are then most feeble, and must be augmented by all the supernal powers of which man is capable” (Fewkes 1920: 497).

Without the intercession of the medicine people, the sun would continue moving south and its warmth wouldn’t return. Humans had a critical and active part to play in keeping the cycle working correctly. The above account deals with several factors: a ceremony, people making an offering, people assisting a spirit, Sun Spirit’s home not in the Upper Skyworld but in the Lower Underworld, and Sun Spirit traveling to the Upperworld. These factors are key to understanding what took place at stone structure sites in the northeastern United States.

In North Salem, New Hampshire at the America’s Stonehenge site, there is evidence of three Sun Ceremonies: Winter Solstice, Spring Equinox and Summer Solstice.

Winter Solstice Sunset: An upright alignment stone marks the solstice event. The top of the stone has a special shape: a peak and two shoulders (Figure 17). Approximately 200 feet directly downhill from the alignment stone there is exposed split bedrock. Leaning against the split bedrock are three triangular slabs (Figure 18). These slabs confirm the split bedrock was utilized for a ceremony (Gage 2006: 47, 48). Viewing the winter solstice sunset at the alignment stone creates the illusion the sun is sinking into the split bedrock below. Yet on the next day the sun reappears. What seems to be the case, the Native Americans viewed the Sun’s spirit as leaving the sphere of the sun and staying in the Underworld for the winter (*Ibid:* 57).

Equinox Sunrise: A tall upright alignment stone with a long slanted side and slight depression on top marks the equinox event. The stone was erected beside a large split boulder. Attached to the end of the split boulder is a niche, confirming it was used in the ceremony. To figure out which equinox was represented, spring or fall, the author evaluated the location of the split boulder. This time it was beside the alignment, not in line with it. On its far end is the niche, a short distance downhill is a short standing stone with a U-shaped cutout top. It was oriented downslope towards a lodge. The lodge had two hearths with charcoal radiocarbon-dated to 1900 B.P., 1600 B.P., and 1195 B.P. (Gage 2006: 131). The dates show it was used for seven hundred years. The dilemma is there were no artifacts. That, in turn, suggests the lodge was used for ceremonial purposes. The arrangement of structures suggests the Sun Spirit was called out of Underworld via the split boulder by placing an offering in the niche attached to it. The spirit was then directed down to the lodge via the standing stone with the U-shaped top, a directional spirit portal. There it waited. A short time before sunrise, Sun Spirit was carried by fire/smoke back up hill to the alignment stone. There it used the scooped out top to await the arrival of the sphere of the sun. Upon arrival Sun Spirit reunited with the sphere of the sun and traveled back to Upperworld. Since Sun Spirit was rejoining the sphere of the sun it can be concluded this was a spring equinox alignment (Gage 2006: 127-133).

Summer Solstice Sunrise and Sunset: The sunrise alignment stone is a stark rectangular slab with a single steep slanted side (Figure 19). There are no split stones associated with the sunrise stone. The reason is the Sun Spirit was already in Upperworld due to the fact the alignment takes place about a half-hour after sunrise (Gage 2006). On this special day, the Sun Spirit could travel, that is, leave the sphere of the sun and join the people in a day long ceremony. The specialized alignment stone acted as a portal, it allowed the spirit to slide off and enter the site. The sphere of the sun continued on its daily arc of the sky.

For sunset another type of alignment stone was erected (Figure 20). Like the Winter Solstice sunset stone, it had a peak and two shoulders. The shoulder kept the spirit from sliding off the stone and at the same time directed it downhill to a split stone. At the split stone, a portal, the Sun Spirit who had rejoined the sphere of the sun went into the Underworld for the night. This is the only solar ceremony on site with a sunrise and sunset. That suggests the Sun Spirit was joined with the sphere night and day during spring, summer and fall. In that capacity, it traveled in a daily cycle between Underworld and Upperworld (Gage 2006: 152-155, 193-200).

In comparison, the winter solstice is strictly a sunset event, indicating the Sun Spirit left the sphere and thus Upperworld and went into the Underworld for the winter. The spring equinox is strictly a sunrise event, suggesting the Sun Spirit returned to the sphere and thus Upperworld for the spring, summer and fall. The winter and equinox alignments are reverse of each other.



Figure 17. The winter solstice sunset stone at America's Stonehenge, North Salem, New Hampshire has a special shape: a peak and two shoulders.



Figure 18. Two hundred feet downhill from the winter solstice stone in Figure 17 is split bedrock marked by three triangular stones. Three triangles confirm that the split was part of the ceremony.



Figure 19. The summer solstice sunrise stone at America's Stonehenge has a single steep slanted side.



Figure 20. The summer solstice sunset stone at America's Stonehenge has the same peak and two shoulders design as the winter solstice sunset stone.

The alignments were confirmed by two methods. One was visual viewing in person. The second was by analyzing the shapes of the alignment stones. Both sunrise stones are tall and have a single slanted side. In comparison, both sunset stones have a peak and two shoulders.

In Groton, Connecticut at the Gungywamp Site the large stone chamber has a sunset equinox alignment. A sun beam goes through the chamber and hits the entry to a small side chamber (Barron and Mason 1994: 9). This suggests the Sun Spirit entered the Underworld. Being on the equinox suggests it went into the Underworld for the cold weather months. That makes this a fall equinox event. It is consistent with America's Stonehenge but instead of the winter solstice, Sun Spirit left on the fall equinox at the start of the cold weather months. At each of these sites Sun Spirit travels between Upperworld and Underworld assisted by people, as expressed in the written word by Fewkes of the Zuni people.

That brings us back to Lawton Foster, the elder's stone chamber alignment. Foster held a large ceremony on his farm as judged by a large Open-End/Closed-End cairn six feet high by twenty-two feet long (Gage and Gage 2017: 60). It is likely the winter solstice alignment marked the day of a winter ceremony, and served to assist the Sun Spirit in leaving Upperworld and going into Underworld. If Sun Spirit did not go into Underworld it could not return to Upperworld in the spring or summer, and thus there would be no summer and hence, no growing season. Sun Spirit's travels had a direct impact on farming.

Underworld Ceremony & Underworld Structures

Evidence of Underworld in this study was present in two forms: stone chambers and split stone cairns. Splits in stone used as spirit portals have been documented in the Great Lakes region (Jeness 1935: 42, 43, 44, 45; Dewdney & Kidd 1967: 13). They were used by people's spirits during vision quests to go into the Underworld, and by various other spirits. Most split stone cairns are filled with stone offerings, indicating offerings were made to spirits in the Underworld.

Documented Sites in Rhode Island & Connecticut with Underworld Structures

- Cam Homestead: split stone cairn, serpent (Figure 13).
- Jonathan Foster Farm: two stone chambers, numerous split stone cairns, serpents, all of which are associated with the Underworld (see Figure 14).
- Lawton Foster the Younger Farm: numerous split stone cairns, serpents (see Figure 15).
- Lawton Foster the Elder Farm: stone chamber, split stone cairns (see Figure 16).
- Original Schaghticoke (AKA "Scatacook") reservation land: split stone cairn with serpent effigy on top (Figure 22).



(Hauptman and Hagan 1990: 145).

Figure 21. Serpent effigy built on top of a split stone cairn on land formerly part of the original Schaghticoke Reservation, Kent, Connecticut. The serpent has an object in its mouth, which may be a seed. In some Native American oral traditions, the serpent brought seeds to the people (see text).

Serpent & Underworld

"An early Dutch text presents a shaman's eye view of the property-offering ritual, wherein a guardian spirit, in the form of a snake and another spirit take possession of the valuables: 'They have a hole in a hill in which they place a kettle full of all sorts of articles ... as a part of their treasures. Then a snake comes in, then they all depart, and the Manitou, that is the Devil, comes in the night and takes the kettle away, ...'"

The above historic account about the Pequot of southeastern Connecticut shows the tribe had a ritual or ceremony involving "a guardian spirit, in the form of a snake". Although there is no reference to agriculture it shows a southern New England tribe engaging in a ceremony involving the Underworld and a serpent. This aligns with the Schaghticoke's historic Rattlesnake ceremony.

As noted above, the Schaghticoke of northwestern Connecticut also had a stone serpent effigy associated with the Underworld, viz. the split stone cairn on which it was placed (Figure 21). In turn, that ties in with the stone serpent effigies in Hopkinton, Rhode Island. Stone chambers are the equivalent of natural caves. They have all the same attributes and, therefore, ceremonial stone chambers can be equated to the Underworld. The question is how does the Underworld fit into agriculture?

Why were Underworld Ceremonies integrated into farms?

The answer may lie in a Hopi legend:

"In very old times, the legend states, before the seeds of corn and other food which form the diet of the Hopi were brought to mankind, thereby changing their cultural condition, the announcement of this gift was made to a gathering of people who sat around a large sacred stone bemoaning their lot. A voice issuing from beneath the stone, called to the bravest of them to go down into the bowels of the earth to meet the God of Germs [germination]. No one of their number dared to accept this invitation save a young man not yet of high standing in the priesthood. He replied to the voice, 'What shall I do to enter the underworld?' and the voice replied, 'Put your hand on the rock before you.' The boy immediately did this and a cleft [split] appeared, widening into a passageway through which he descended.

He passed into the underworld and there entered a beautiful room adorned with sea shells, turquoises, and other objects dear to the Hopi heart. In the middle of the room was the god resplendent in his costuming, wearing about his loins a girdle made of red horse-hair, holding in one hand the shield of the sun and in the other a whip made of yucca. As the boy approached this being he was greeted with the words 'You are welcome here, but you must endure much suffering before you depart. If you are brave of heart you will carry back to your people gifts of great value.' As a proof that I will aid you, I give you here a bundle of seeds which you shall plant yearly" (Fewkes 1920: 525).

One, corn migrated into the northeast from the southwest. Secondly, a split in the stone created an entrance to the Underworld. Thirdly, the description of the Underworld conjures up a beautiful place. Fourthly, the gift of (corn) seeds is given by the God of Germs depicted as Sun Spirit in the legend. The ceremony was held every February.

The Hopi were not the only Native culture to associate the Underworld with food. The two following quotes come from the Blackfeet of Montana and Alberta.

"As the sun rose from the plains, Bull Child prayed, 'Great Spirit in the Sun! I know that this is a pure woman. If her sick boy recovers, I promise you that she will give a Sundance and will eat of the sacred food with you and with the Underground Spirit'" (McClintock 1968: 175).

Walter McClintock was a photographer lived with and recorded the Blackfeet's ceremonies during the years 1896 to 1900. Another quote from the Blackfeet clarifies the significance of the Underworld connection:

"He handed the tongue to his sister, who held it up, praying to the Sun Power for all the people. Breaking a small piece from the tongue, she buried it in the earth, praying to the Underground Spirits that all might have plenty to eat" (McClintock 1968: 317).

During the harvest of sarvis berries the Blackfeet again made offerings to the Sun and Underground Spirits:

"All waited while Onesta held a berry up, with a prayer that we all might have abundance of food during the coming year, and then we followed his example, by planting a berry in the ground, with a similar prayer to the Underground Spirits" (McClintock 1968: 367).

The Blackfeet understood it took the sun's light and warmth along with the earth (Underworld) for the sarvis berry, a wild plant, to live, grow, and produce berries. This also shows that Native cultures who were geographically distant held similar beliefs. Hopi of the southwest and Blackfeet of the northwest, held the same beliefs. The Mandan of the northern Plains also felt the Underworld was significant:

"A few still remembered the place, however, when the anthropologist George Will began his fieldwork among the Mandans of central North Dakota early in the twentieth century. Mandan elders told him of a sacred cave north of the Black Hills. From this opening to the underworld, bison emerged periodically to replenish the herds, so the people might live. The people prayed and left offerings at the Ludlow Cave and other "buffalo home" buttes to entreat the bison to continue to support human life" (Sundstrom 2004: 81).

The Caddo also had a story related to the Underworld:

"The Man Who Turned into a Snake"

"One time two boys who were close friends went out hunting. They met a large snake, and one of the boys killed it and cooked it. The other boy begged him not to eat it, but to eat the buffalo meat that he had prepared; but the boy would not listen to him and ate the snake meat. That was in the evening. The next morning the boy who had eaten the snake meat began to turn into a snake. After another day and night he had completely turned into a snake. He told his friend to go to the mountain and find a hole for him to live in. The friend found a hole and carried the snake to it. The snake told him to go to their village and tell his people what had happened to him, and to tell them that whenever they went to hunt to stop and offer presents to him and he would help them in the hunt. The snake lived there for many years until the lightning killed him" (Dorsey 1905: 66).

Lavin illustrates a Late Woodland Niantic Stamped style cooking pot from the Tubbs archaeological site in Niantic, Connecticut, whose rim points were decorated with the spiritual symbol representing the six directions: north, south, east, west, Upperworld and Underworld (Lavin 2013: 280). This artifact connects the various worlds with food.

The Underworld and its spirits were believed to be a provider of food for the people among diverse Native cultures: Hopi of Arizona, Mandan of North Dakota, and Blackfeet of Montana and Alberta. The Caddo of Arkansas, East Texas & Louisiana had a similar story in that it has a snake spirit living in the Underworld who assists the people in procuring meat. The food ranged from bison to domestic corn to wild berries. The Caddo's origin stories also expressed the Underworld as the source of food (see Women, Serpents & Food). The Niantic cooking pot ties this belief into the southern New England region.

Although "Underworld" has a negative connotation in western society today, traditional Native American thought perceived it in more positive terms -- it was the bearer of food. The examples provided above show a widespread belief among various Native cultures across North America that the Underworld is connected to agriculture and human survival.

What did the tribes think of the Underworld?

The Hopi were one of several Native cultures to believe the Underworld was a safe place and that Sun Spirit went into it. The Parry Islanders in the Great Lakes region and Cherokee of Oklahoma also had similar beliefs. 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 ..." (Jeness 1935: 57-59). Sun Spirit provided light. The vision showed the Sun in the Underworld, and it concluded with Ogauns meeting the "blessed *manido*" not the Christian's Devil (spirit), although he encountered both good and bad spirits in the Underworld.

According to Jonas King, an Ojibwa Indian from Parry Island,

"... the animals (i.e., their souls [spirits]) have sometimes carried off a boy or a man to protect him from danger, or to bestow on him some blessing; but they have returned him to his people again after the lapse of several months or years. 'One winter a moose, in the form of a big old man, carried two boys away to a land where there was no snow. It was bitokomegog, the underground world in which the moose have their village. Some time afterwards he brought the boys back to earth and restored them to their people (Jonas King)'" (Jeness 1935: 24).

Ethnographer James Mooney, an anthropologist at the Smithsonian's the Bureau of American Ethnology, lived among the Cherokee for several years. In his book *Myths of the Cherokee*, he recorded their perception of the Underworld:

"There is another world under this, and it is like ours in everything—animals, plants, and people—save that the seasons are different. The streams that come down from the mountains are the trails by which we reach this underworld, and the springs at their heads are the doorways by which we enter it, but to do this one must fast and go to water and have one of the underground people for a guide. We know that the seasons in the underworld are different from ours, because the water in the springs is always warmer in winter and cooler in summer than the outer air" (Mooney 1900: 240).

Ojibway Ceremony: "Petition to Makataeshigun"

“Finally, the elder would make an appeal to Makataeshigun, the Spirit of the Underworld. This was the remembrance that Makataeshigun had requested, when he first gave medicines to the people:

Patron of the deep

Patron of the dark

Patron of the night

Patron of the arcane

Patron of the hidden.

Forbear!

Stay far

From our sleep

From our minds

From our spirits.

Let our spirits wander

From depth to depth

From breadth to breadth

Inward and outward

Within their beings,

In quest for peace (Johnson 1990: 111).

Diamond Jenness was Chief of Anthropology at the National Museum of Canada from 1926 till his retirement in 1948; in 1939 he served as President of the American Anthropological Association. He wrote over 100 publications on Canada's Native peoples, including the spiritual beliefs of the Ojibwa of Parry Island:

“One old man, John Manatuwaba, ... claimed that the serpent manido lived under the earth, and through the many subordinate manidos at its command controlled or guarded all the trees and plants” (Jenness 1935: 40).

Manitous of the Underworld gave people gifts: plant medicines, seeds, advice to achieve peace. According to some Natives, Underworld beings controlled trees and plants. Thus, it can be implied the Underworld controlled agricultural plants.

Duality

Jenness, who recorded indigenous accounts in the 1930s, pointed out contradictions that many anthropologists found regarding the supernatural Serpent.

"There is current [1935] also on Parry Island, however, a very different account of the great serpent which makes it not the enemy of the Ojibwa and the patron of sorcerers, but, through the agency of mede' medicinemen, a benefactor" (Jenness 1935: 39).

George Dorsey in his account of the Snake-Woman showed she was the benefactor of seeds, but was also a poisonous snake that could kill (see Women, Serpents & Food below). This shows spirits held dual roles within the culture. Consider, rain, which is controlled by an Upperworld spirit, for the most part it is good; however, too much rain is destructive as in floods. Therefore, in the Native worldview rain is both benevolent and malevolent. (It should be noted that some Native Americans cultures believe that water itself possessed a spirit, "Water runs; it too must possess life, it too must have a soul and a shadow. Then observe how certain minerals cause the neighboring rocks to decompose and become friable; evidently rocks too have power, and power means life, and life involves a soul and shadow. ... To the Ojibwa, then, all objects have life, and life is synonymous with power, which may be directed for the Indian's good or ill" (Jenness 1935: 21)).

Within the Native cultures, Upperworld has good and bad spirits. Underworld has good and bad spirits. This is where Native cultures differ from Christianity, which separates the two worlds. Christianity places good spirits in Upperworld (i.e., Heaven) and bad spirits in Underworld (i.e., Hell). Natives view both worlds as having good and bad spirits. Each culture holds a belief in good and bad spirits, but they do it in very different ways.

WOMEN, SERPENTS & FOOD

The Caddo had two origin stories:

- (1) *"The original home of the Caddo was on lower Red river in Louisiana. According to their own tradition, which has parallels among several other tribes, they came up from under the ground through the mouth of a cave in a hill which they call Cha'kani'na', 'The place of crying,' on a lake close to the south bank of Red river, just at its junction with the Mississippi. In those days men and animals were all brothers and lived together under the ground. But at last they discovered the entrance to the cave leading up to the surface of the earth, and so they decided to ascend and come out. First, an old man climbed up carrying in one hand fire and a pipe and in the other a drum. After him came his wife, with corn and pumpkin seeds. Then followed the rest of the people and the animals. All intended to come out, but as soon as wolf had climbed up he closed the hole, and shut up the rest of the people and animals under the ground, where they still remain. Those who had come out sat down and cried a long time for their friends below, hence the name of the place. Because the Caddo came out of the ground they call it 'ina', mother, and go back to it [Underworld] when they die. Because they have had the pipe and the drum and the corn and pumpkins since they have been a people, they hold fast to these things and have never thrown them away" (Mooney 1896: 1094).*

(2) *“The Great Father gave the seeds of all growing things to Snake-Woman. He taught her how to plant the seeds and how to care for the green things that grew from them until they were ripe, and then how to prepare them for food. One time, when Snake-Woman had more seeds than she could possibly care for, she decided to give some to the people. She called her two sons and asked them to help her carry the seeds. Each put a big bag full of seeds on his back, and then they traveled all over the world, giving six seeds of each kind of plant to every person.*



As Snake-Woman gave each person the seeds she told him that he must plant them, and must care for the plants that grew from them, but must allow no one, especially children, to touch them or even point to them as they grew. She said that until the seeds were ripe they belonged to her, and if any one gathered them too soon she would send a poisonous snake to bite him. Parents always tell their children what Snake-Woman said, and so they are afraid to touch or go near any growing plants for fear a snake will come and bite them” (Dorsey 1905: 18).

Figure 22. The Birger figurine was found near the site of Cahokia. It shows a kneeling woman with a hand on the head of a serpent and a hoe touching its back. Serpent’s tail of vine has gourds. The figurine

illustrates the serpent’s connection to agriculture (public domain image).

Near the archaeological city of Cahokia in southern Illinois, a figurine known as the Birger figurine was excavated (Figure 22).

“The female in the Birger figurine kneels on a circular base with one hand on a feline-headed snake, the other holding a hoe that touches the snake’s back. The snake’s body transforms into vines that issue gourds near the woman’s feet and at her shoulder” (Steadman 2016: 120).

Steadman says the figurine, “represents important symbolic notions of the underworld and its constituent elements, including serpent monsters, water, and fertility.” Symbolism of woman, serpent, food and Underworld found among the Cahokia, and Caddo is reflected in the pottery of southern New England. Lucianne Lavin, author of the book *Connecticut’s Indigenous Peoples*, points out that images representing woman, child and female genitalia are found on Late Woodland and Contact period indigenous clay cooking pots. She concluded that “The pots, almost all used for cooking gruels and stews, symbolically called for the increased fertility of Native foods ...” (Lavin 2013: 280-281).

ANTHROPOLOGICAL ACCOUNTS MATCH ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARTIFACTS

"The Caddo are the principal southern representatives of the Caddoan stock, which includes also the Wichita, Kichai, Pawnee, and Arikara. Their confederacy consisted of about a dozen tribes or divisions, claiming as their original territory the whole of the lower Red river and adjacent country of Louisiana, eastern Texas, and southern Arkansas" (Mooney 1896: 1092).

With so many tribes, variants of their origin story are to be expected (see above). Mooney recorded one and Dorsey another. Both involved a woman carrying seeds to the people. In Mooney's account it is a female who is a wife. She carried corn and pumpkin seeds with her from the Underworld. In Dorsey's account it is a snake-woman who carried multiple kinds of seeds with her.

The Birger figurine dates to circa A.D. 1000 – 1250, the Middle Mississippian period, and was excavated at the BBB Motor site, on the outskirts of Cahokia in Illinois (Hamell & Fox 2005: 135). The woman is on top of a snake with gourds emanating from its tail. The figurine embodies the Snake-Woman from Dorsey's account and the woman carrying pumpkin seeds out of the Underworld in Mooney's account. Gourds, squash and pumpkins are all in the same plant family. The serpent is an underground or Underworld creature. Cahokia is in Collinsville on the Mississippi River in southwestern Illinois. It was located in a region where it was of influence to other cultures like the Caddo. The combined Caddo stories align with the Birger figurine; thus, the anthropological record matches the archaeological record.

The Ojibwa and Hopi believed splits in stones were portals to the Underworld. Both cultures placed offerings in splits in the form of perishable items such as tobacco and physical items such as ceramics (Dewdney & Kidd 1967: 54). The Hopi also used stones to make offerings in cairns at shrines (Fewkes 1906: photo d). Ceremonial sites in New England contain split stones filled with small stones (Gage and Gage 2017: 113). Again, the anthropological record matches the archaeological record.

CONCLUSION

The ceremonies and associated spirits dealt with in this article exhibited basic core beliefs. What we see is the core beliefs expressed differently from Native culture to Native culture, depending upon its geographical location and food sources. For the Mandan the Underworld was the giver of bison. For the Hopi the Underworld was the giver of seeds. For the Blackfeet the Underworld was the giver of sarvis berries. The varied expression of the same core belief was common to Native cultures that developed as autonomous tribes. Yet as the examples show, they held the same core belief independent of each other. This included core beliefs in food sources, serpents, rain, sun, and Underworld.

Over time, as cultures encountered changes in the environment and migrations of people into their homelands, they adapted to their new circumstances. In turn, ceremonies were adapted to fit the then current needs. Thus, ideas migrated along with types of food and other resources. Corn's migration into the Mound Builders territory, then to the east coast and northeast into the Algonquin territories would have come with legends, stories, and ceremonies. In the southwestern Hopi culture from where corn migrated eastward, corn was the gift of the Underworld. Underworld was the home of the Sun. Serpents: unadorned, feathered and horned were universal across North

America. Serpents were associated with bringing seeds and rain. Rain ceremonies were universal. Spirits not people ruled the universe and everything in it. Crops, domestic and wild, were dependent on spirits. Therefore, when Native Americans acclimatized to Euro-American style farming they integrated traditional ceremonies into their farms for survival.

AFTERWORD

Theory

The Schaghticoke serpent effigy (Figure 21) is a miniature of the Ohio Serpent Mound (Figure 23). The Serpent Mound has been C14 dated to the Early Woodland period, Adena, 2300 years ago with a renovation 1400 years later during the late prehistoric period (Herrmann 2014) This places the Serpent Mound in the agricultural eras of the Mound Builder Cultures.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s when anthropologists were recording ceremonies in the Southwest, there was heavy emphasis on corn agriculture. Serpents, sun, earth (i.e., Underworld), rain, and corn were key components. Corn in one form or another was present at the ceremonies. Seed corn was used in some ceremonies.

“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 this 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” (Fewkes 1920: 501).

The Great Serpent Mound’s head faces Ohio Brush Creek with an oval object in its mouth. The creek is running water. The Serpent Mound layout fits the Zuni ceremony with running water and seeds. The Birger figurine contains gourds emanating from the tail of the serpent. This confirms the residents of Cahokia, a mound builder culture, believed in a connection between the serpent and food. Fewkes tied Mesoamerica to the southwest Pueblos. In turn, he ties those two to the Great Serpent Mound (Fewkes 1920: 523). It is a logical theory.

I am going to take it a step further. Combining all the evidence suggests the oval object in the mouth of the Great Serpent Mound is a “seed”. The Adena, Hopewell and Mississippian cultures though culturally different were all agriculture-dependent. A belief in the Great Serpent being the originator of seeds would account for its larger than life presence, high status and longevity.

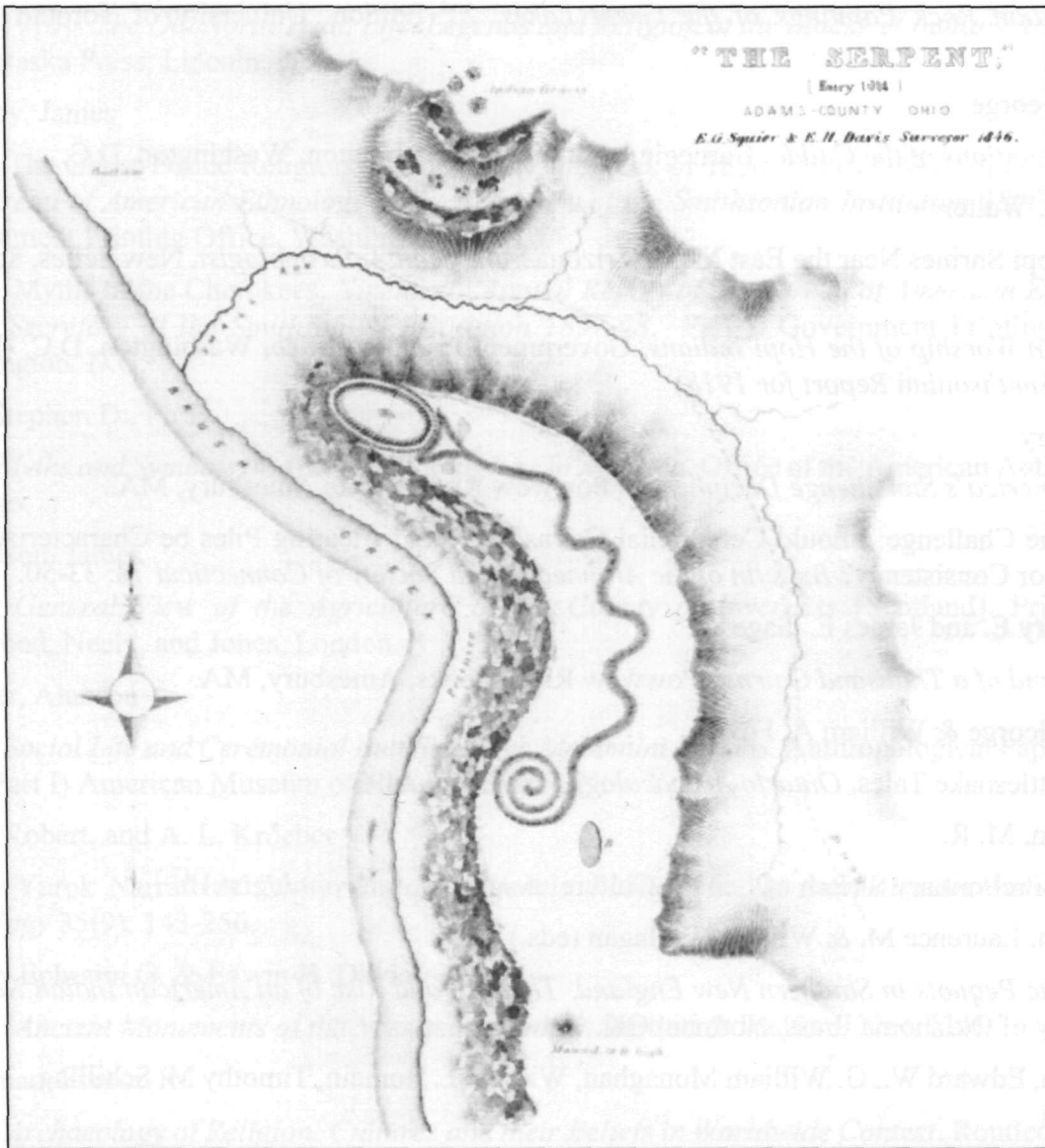


Figure 23. Ohio Serpent Mound shows the snake with an object in its mouth. (Squire & Davis 1848: Plate XXXV).

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