

Jonathan G. Foster Farm & Historic Ceremonial Site – Center Area

Formerly Canonchet Brook Site 9

Analysis by Mary Gage

Photos by Steve DiMarzo, Jr. and James Gage

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Canonchet Brook Sites 8, 9, and 10 were originally designated based upon a very preliminary survey of the property by Steve DiMarzo and Todd Carden. Since the original reports were issued in 2014, Steve DiMarzo has done additional documentation, Rick Prescott, Hopkinton Historical Association has researched the deeds and genealogy of the area, and James Gage & Mary Gage conducted a field trip in October 2016 to better access the sites. All of this new information has required a reorganization of the reports and site designations.

Sites 8, 9, and 10 are all within the confines of the 50 acre Jonathan G. Foster Farm and are part of a historic Native American ceremonial site which was contemporary with the farming operation. All of the structures belong to a single site rather than three separate sites. Within this single site, four separate areas or sub-sites are discernable: East Side, West Side, Central, and South Side.

The Jonathan G. Foster Farm is one of three Foster farms discussed in the book *Land of a Thousand Cairns: Revival of Old-Style Ceremonies* (2017) by Mary Gage and James Gage. The book covers land use history, ownership, genealogy, and a detailed analysis of the stone structures. The reader is directed to that book for a more detailed description. What follows in this report is a basic summary of the pertinent facts. The book puts forth the theory that the three generations of Fosters who lived along Lawton Foster Road, Hopkinton, RI (Jonathan was the 2nd generation) were Native Americans who adopted the outward appearances of white culture while at the same time continued traditional spiritual practices and ceremonies.

Only a small number of the estimated 250 to 300 structures on the 50 acres have been documented.

Chronology and Ownership of 50 Acre Lot

17xx – 1801 Caleb Church *Property in state receivership from 1791 to 1801

1801 Caleb Church to John Cottrell \$300 (Hopkinton Land Records bk.5 pg.422)

1801 John Cottrell obtained mortgage from Matthew Stillman \$318 [included interest] (bk.5 pg.423)

Default on mortgage (not recorded)

1806 Matthew Stillman to Martin Brightman \$320 (bk.6 pg.162)

1814 Martin Brightman to his nephews Thomas Brightman and Joseph Brightman \$500 (bk.6 pg.474) *The price increase suggests Martin made improvements to the land which may have included a small house and clearing of pasture land.

1814-1816 Joseph Brightman, his wife Patience, and daughter Martha lived on the property

1816 Joseph died

1818 Patience married Jonathan G. Foster, Thomas Brightman sold his half interest in the farm to Patience for \$250 (bk.7 pg.141)

After 1818 Jonathan Foster built a house with a double cellar, large barn, and sawmill. The remains of all three are present on the property. Sawmill was likely built in the 1830s and operated through at least 1870. It was transferred to his son Lawton Foster circa 1868.

1869 Jonathan Foster died.

1869-1888 farm owned and operated by Jonathan Foster's daughter Samantha Clarke (widow). (1870 map, Hopkinton Tax Books¹)

1888 Samantha Clarke died.

1889-c.1900 farm owned by Samantha's daughter Susan J. Spencer. (1895 Map)

c.1900 Property to sold the Hosxie family who owned a nearby farm.

Land Usage (based upon Joseph Brightman [1816] and Jonathan Foster [1869] probate records)

Small scale sheep farming (flock up to 10 sheep)

1 to 3 diary cows

1 pig

Crops: Corn, potatoes, rye

Orchard

Hay – Unclear if the farm had hay fields or not (hay may have come from rented fields elsewhere)

Timber harvesting & sawmill

NOTE: STRUCTURE #s

Steve DiMarzo explored this site on several different occasions. On two of the occasions the numbers were started at "1" which has caused some confusion. The structures documented during these individual trips ended up in different sub-sites causing additional problems. By the time the issue was discovered it was too late to renumber everything. Where two of same # occur in a given sub-site one was renumbered with the addition of an "A" (ex. #13 became #13A) The Gages October 2016 trip designated structures as A## to avoid any further confusion.

¹ 1868 et seq. *Assessors Valuation of Taxable Property in the Town of Hopkinton [date]*. a/k/a Hopkinton Tax Book. Westerly, RI.: G.B. & J.H. Utter, Printers. Available online on Google Books

Overview

The Center Area includes a double house cellar, large barn foundation with root cellar, a large stone chamber, small stone chamber, cairns, and other features. The area is defined by a series of stone walls around the perimeter. The house and barn were reached by a farm road coming in from Lawton Foster Road. A second farm road with a stone causeway across a seasonal stream provided access to the east side of the farm.

Double House Cellar

Description from *Land of a Thousand Cairns* (2017) (reprinted with permission)

“The foundation has two below ground cellars dug into a terrace with a retaining wall on the back (north) side. Between the retaining wall and the cellars is a wide earth filled berm used to insulate the cellar from the cold. Each cellar had its own exterior stone stairway leading into it. Both cellars are similar and appear to be contemporary (i.e. built at the same time). They were built using the dry masonry method (no mortar). The east cellar had a partial raised bedrock floor. A wide strip of earth fill between the two cellars supported the stone chimney block for a large center chimney. A single large flat door stone was found on the south side of the foundation near the front center of the house. This suggests a single front entrance. No quarry marks were found on any of the stonework. The layout indicates a pre-1830 center chimney house design. The lack of quarry tool marks supports this dating. Overall, the house appears to have been approximately 30 feet x 50 feet.” (pg. 75)

West Cellar



Chimney block remnants on left, stairs bottom right of photo



Exterior bulkhead stairway into cellar

East Cellar



Interior view of cellar



Exposed bedrock inside cellar

Center Chimney Block & Fireplace Remnants



Barn Foundation

Please see *Land of a Thousand Cairns* for a detailed description (pages 77-80)

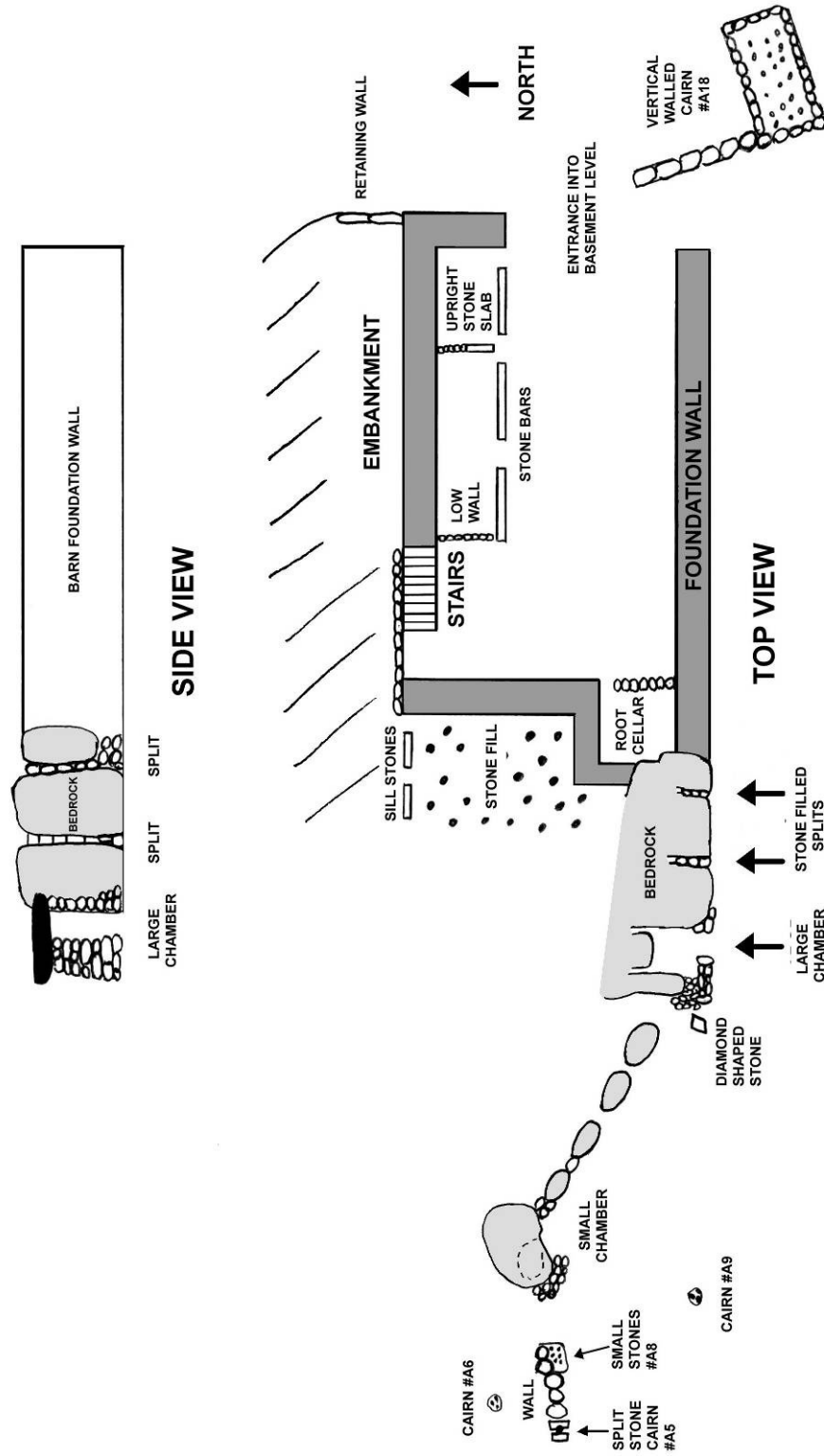


Illustration from *Land of a Thousand Cairns* (2017) (reprinted with permission)



Overall view of the barn. Root cellar is in foreground (arrow).



Top down view of root cellar



Interior of root cellar (arrow points to outcrop)

Small Chamber

Entry: 1' 11" H x 1' 9" W

Interior: oval shape 7' 8" L from front to back, interior height (estimate) 2' to 2' 6"

Location: 40' west of large chamber / 52' west of barn

Orientation: 155° (magnetic north)

Chamber is built under the overhang of projecting section of bedrock. The bedrock forms the chamber's roof. The interior walls were built using the dry masonry technique (no mortar). One section of wall used short slabs and another section was a mix of slabs and cobbles. The entrance drops down to the floor level. The entrance is crawl-in height. The small chamber is linked to the large chamber via short retaining wall.

See *Land of Thousand Cairns* pages 129-132 for more details



Entrance into small chamber. Arrow indicates bedrock roof.



Left and rear interior walls – mix of slabs and cobbles



Right interior wall – all stone slabs

Large Chamber

Location: At the far end of 20' 6" long bedrock outcrop. The other end of the outcrop forms the southwest corner of the barn.

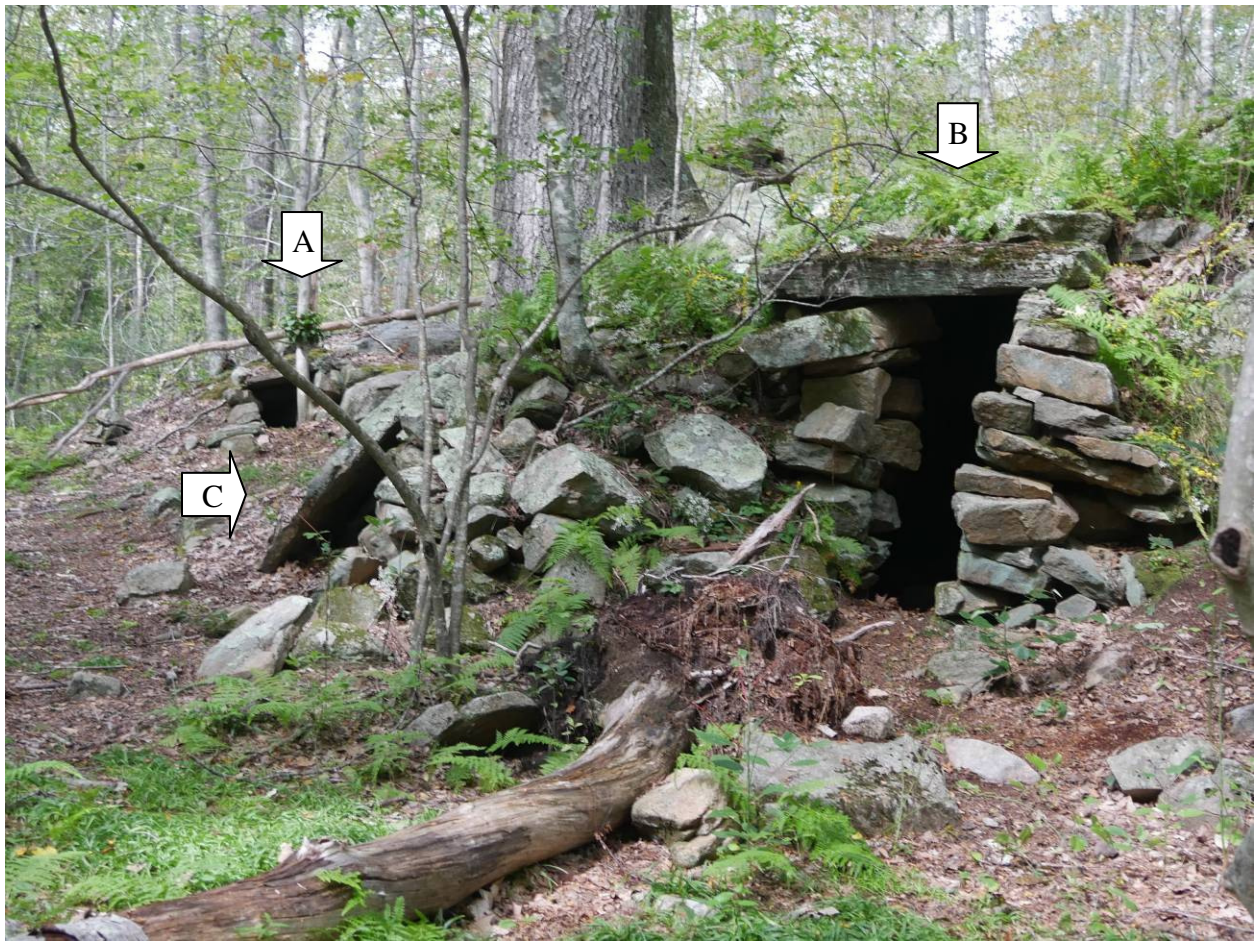
Interior: 5' 6" wide x 6-7' deep x about 6' high

Entrance: 1' 6" W x 5' H

Orientation: 170° (magnetic north)

The chamber was built into a wide split in the bedrock. East wall was solid bedrock. The west wall is fractured large pieces of bedrock. Rear wall is a mix of bedrock and dry masonry walling. The entrance is walk-in height and has finished stonework on both sides. Roof was built using a series of large stone slabs. A diamond shaped stone slab leans against the outside of the chamber.

See *Land of Thousand Cairns* for more details and interpretation (pages 132-136)



(A) Small chamber (b) Large Chamber (C) Diamond Shaped Slab



Looking out the entrance from inside



View of roof slabs



Interior - rear wall

Diamond Shaped Slab

Diamond shaped stone slab leaning against the outside of the large chamber.



Note: “AXX” designate structures documented by the Gages during their October 2016 trip.

A5 Split Stone Cairn at end of short stone wall

Base Stone: 2' 6" L x 2' H x 1' 9" W
Stone Sizes: Medium, small

Rectangular block of stone with at least 5 stones inside split. Split stone is at the western end of a short stone wall segment near the small chamber



A6 Single Layer of Stones on Top of Boulder

Base Stone: 3' L x 1' H
Cairn Size: 2' 7" L x 2' W
Stone Sizes: Medium, small, extra-small (1-3")

One quartz stone



Small & extra small stones



A7 Vertical Walled Cairn on Top of Boulder in a Stonewall

Stone Sizes: Extra-large, large, medium, small

This cairn is technically outside of the Center Area but doesn't appear to belong with the West Side. A stone wall extends outward perpendicular to the stone wall enclosing the Center to a boulder. The cairn is built on the boulder. The wall extends beyond the end of the cairn. There is a possible niche feature in the cairn. The cairn is located in a rocky wetlands area.



Wall in the foreground is the perimeter wall around the Center Area

Side view. Note the ferns indicating a wet environment.



Possible niche feature



A8 Small stone offering feature at end of short stone wall

This feature is found at the east end of a short stone wall segment. The opposite end has the spit stone cairn A5. There is a gap between the end of the wall and the small chamber which appears to be the entrance into the chamber area. The offering stones range from 2 to 4 inches in length.



A9 Three Stones on Top of Boulder

Base Stone: 6" H x 2' 4" W
Stone Sizes: Medium



A14 Mound on Ground Cairn

Note the large number of stones in this cairn between 1 and 4 inches in length



A18 Large Rectangular Vertical Walled Cairn with Stone Wall

It is located southeast of the corner of the barn. It is a rectangular vertical walled structure built on the ground. The interior is filled with stones. A short wall extends northward from it.

