

Jonathan G. Foster Farm & Historic Ceremonial Site – East Side Area

Formerly Canonchet Brook Site 8 & part of Site 10

Analysis by Mary Gage

Photos by Steve DiMarzo, Jr. & 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

#1 Split Stone Cairn attached to end of stonewall

Two boulder like outcrops form the sides

Base Stones – 6' high (both)

Cairn – 5½' H x 6' L (top) 4' L (bottom) x approximately 3' wide (top)

Features:

Short wall in front of and parallel to cairn retaining wall

Side 1 boulder juts out with an overhang:

- a) small stones on ground underneath overhang
- b) white stone protrusion underneath
- c) on top cairn extends out to far edge

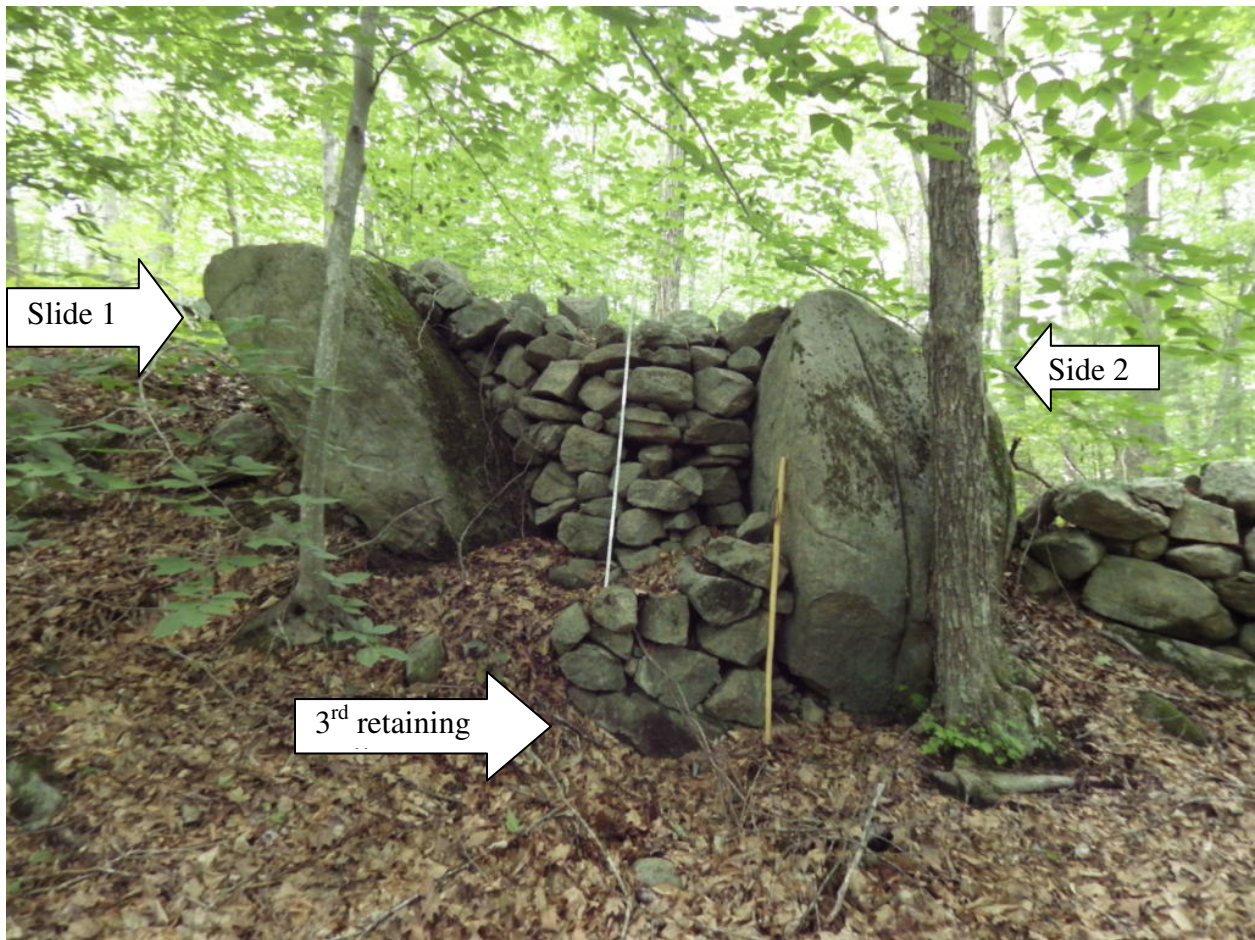
The cairn is made up of two tall boulder-outcrops approximately 6 feet apart at top. Sides slant inwards with approximately 4 feet space at bottom. Two parallel retaining walls were built from side to side inside. The exterior side is straight and flat. The interior side bulges out in a semi-triangular shape. A second short wall parallels the interior wall with very little space between them. This feature is likely the start of third retaining wall which would have expanded the cairn's lifespan. It was never completed suggesting the site was abandoned at that point. Small blocks and slabs of stone were used in the construction of the retaining walls. The space in between was filled with small stones. On top of the boulders the cairn was extended out to the edge on both sides. This is an unusual split stone cairn.

Underneath the overhang of side 1 there are some small stones on the ground. There is also a white stone protrusion which is likely symbolic. Side 1 does not have the stonewall attached.

Side 2 has a double-stone wide stonewall attached. The stones at the point the wall attaches to the boulder-outcrop are larger than in the cairn retaining wall. The attached stonewall is approximately 3 feet high about half the height of the cairn retaining walls.

A comparison of the long stonewall to the split stone cairn walls shows they were built differently. The split stone cairn was made up of two walls with fill in between. The long stonewall was made up of large stones from side to side. It does not contain fill. The long stonewall is half the height (shorter) than the cairn's walls. Yet both attach to the same boulder-outcrop. The boulder-outcrop only dictated the height of the cairn not the long stonewall.

Photos for #1



Top view showing two parallel walls with fill between boulders

Photos for #1 (Continued)



Side 1 – Stones extended over top of the boulder. Also note the stone sunder the overhang.



Stone wall leading up to Side 2. Note the different type of construction in the stone wall leading up to structure versus the stone wall between the two boulders.

#2 through #6 not used for the East Side Area

#7 Mound on the ground

Cairn 8' to 9' diameter
Dome shaped circular mound
Stone Sizes: Large, medium
Large and medium stones were used to construct the cairn. There is a possible pocket of small stones on top.



#8 Mound on the ground

Cairn: 2 ½' High x 3' Diameter
Dome shaped circular mound
Stone Sizes: Large, medium
Large and medium stones were used to construct the cairn.
Three large stone slabs on top
1) Triangular
2) Rectangular
3) Rectangular with four medium stones on top



#9 Vertical Walled with fill attached (integrated with) to a stone wall on one side and on top of a base stone on opposite side cairn

Cairn: 4' H
Stone sizes: Large, medium, small
Large and medium stones in vertical wall and small stones inside



#9A Vertical Wall Cairn Attached to Stone Wall

Cairn: 2' 6" H x 3' 6" L x 3' W
Stone size: Large, medium

Some large stones have been placed on top.



#9B Vertical Wall Cairn Attached to Stone Wall

Size: 2' 6" H x about 8' L x 7' W
Stone sizes: Large, medium

Vertical wall is on two sides. The third side is in poor condition.



#10 not used in East Side area

#11 One Stone on Top of Boulder

Base stone: 10" H
Stone size: 8" x 12"



#12A Double Layer of Stones on Top of Boulder

Cairn: 1 1/2' H x 4' W x 5' L
Stone sizes: Large, medium



#12 Open End / Closed End Split Stone Cairn: Pyramid shaped vertical wall with sloping backside on top of low exposed bedrock

Cairn: 5' H

Low bedrock on one side and a low boulder on opposite side at base form the split aspect,

Feature: open channel at base of pyramid
The open channel at the bottom was found at site 6 with cairn #12. It appears to represent an Underworld spirit portal.



This view shows the pyramid shape
Arrow points to channel



Interior of the open channel



View from a different angle

#12 (Continued)



Open side (left) and Closed side (right)
Cairn slopes down from the closed side to the open side

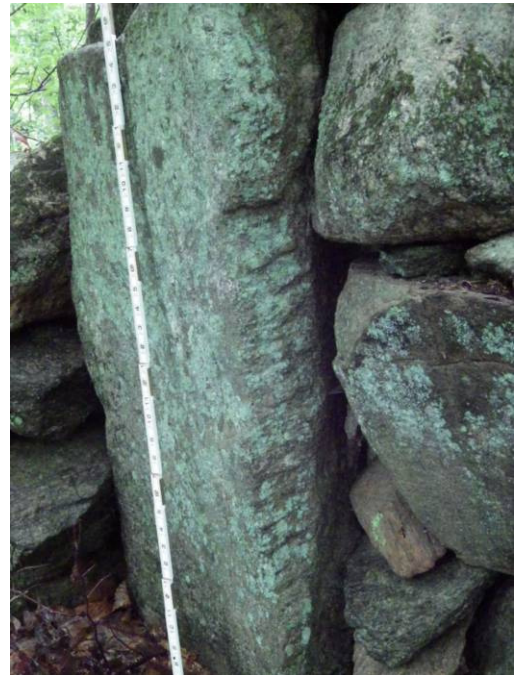


Another view showing the open side in the foreground

#13A Standing Stone

This standing was placed in a stone wall lining the east side of the farm road leading into the house and barn. The flat side of the standing stone faces east (away from the road). The stone has a vertical rectangular shape. The shape is not totally natural, on one of the narrow sides there are chisel marks showing it was manually shaped. Across the bottom at the soil line there is a chiseled line. The line marks the depth at which the stone was intended to be sunk into the ground. These two features are common on gravestones. The line and chisel mark date the stone to the 1700s or 1800s. The standing stone is in an interior stone wall of the farm (rather than a boundary wall). This rules out any potential meer stone or boundary marker explanation. Its function was likely ceremonial.

Standing stone: 3½' H



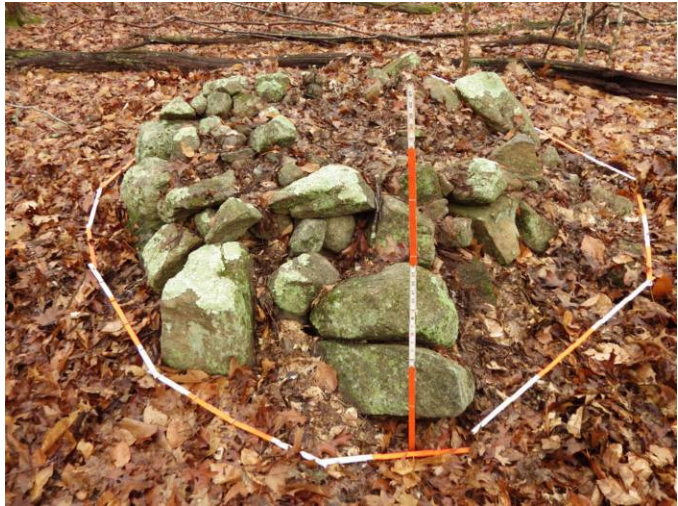
Chisel marks on side



Carved line near ground

#13 Mound on Top of Boulder

Cairn: 2' H x 6' W x 7' L
Stone sizes: Large, medium



#14 Mound Attached to Boulder

Base stone: 1½' W x 2' L
Cairn: 1' H x 6' W x 6' L
Stone sizes: Large, medium, small



#15 Mound Attached to Boulder

Base stone: 1½' H x 2' W x 4½' L
Cairn: 2' W x 5' L
Stone sizes: Extra large, large, medium



#16 Five Stones on Top Along Edge & Trash Dump

Base stone: 14" H x 2 1/2' W x 3' L

Stone sizes: Large, medium

Boot Upper on top of base stone

Boot heel on top cairn

Trash Dump: next to cairn with bottles (possibly with screw tops), two large metal rings, long strip of metal (part)

Was the boot a later model as James suggests in notes and used as an offering? What is the heel doing on top? It too appears to be an offering. Or was the boot upper and heel simply a part of the trash dump? At Canonchet 6 a cloth handkerchief was folded and tucked into the stones of a cairn. The boot upper is simply laid on top. At this point it is not confirmed the boot upper and heel are offerings though they might be.



Note: metal ring in background



Close-up of boot uppers – note the machine sewing & metal eye holes

#17 Mound on Ground

Cairn: 14" H x 6'W x 6'L
Stone sizes: Large, medium, small



#18 Mound Attached to Boulder

Cairn: 14" H x 3'W x 4'L
Stone sizes: Large, medium, small



#19 Split Stone Cairn

Cairn: 4'H x 3'W x 7'L
Stone sizes: Extra large, large, medium



#19 continued



#20 Multi-Stones on Top of Boulder

Cairn: 2'H x 5'W x 6'L
Stone sizes: Large, medium



#21 Mound on Ground

Cairn: 18" H x 6'W x 7'L
Stone sizes: Large, medium



#22 Mound on Ground

Cairn: 1' H x 3'W x 5'L

Stone sizes: Large, medium, small



#23 One Stone on Top of Boulder – Triangular

Base stone: 2'W x 4'L

Stone size: 2' x 2' x 2'



#24 Mound on Ground

Cairn: 2' H x 4'W x 5'L

Stone sizes: Large, medium, small



#25 Three Stones on Top of Boulder – Big/Little

Cairn: 18" H x 1½'W x 2'L

Stone sizes: Large, small

Feature: Big/Little (small stone sandwiched between two stone slabs laid horizontally & stacked)



#26 Vertical Cairn on Ground

Stones integrated

Cairn: 18"H x 3'W x 4'L

Stone sizes: Large, medium



#27 One Stone on Top of Boulder

Base stone: 1'H x 2'W x 2'L
Stone size: Large



#28 Two Stones on Top of Boulder – Triangle?

Stone sizes: Extra large, medium
Feature: Potential triangle



#29 Mound Attached to Boulder

Cairn: 2' H x 1 1/2' W x 5'L
Stone sizes: Large, medium, small
Feature: Quartz stone 5" Long



#30 Multi-Stones on Top of Boulder

Base stone: 6" – 2' H x 2'W x 4'L
Stone sizes: Large, medium, small



#31 One Stone on Top of Boulder – Triangular

Base stone: 2'H x 2'W x 3'L
Stone size: Large



Number 836 is a continuation of number 31

#836 Four Stones Attached to Boulder

Cairn: 1½'H x 2'W x 5'L

Stone size: Large



#837 Mound on Ground

Cairn: 1' H x 3'W x 3'L

Stone sizes: Large



#838 Open-End/Closed-End on Ground

Cairn: 2'H x 3'W x 6'L

Stone sizes: Large, medium, small



#838 Continued



#839 Natural ?

Size: 5'W x 6'L

Stone sizes: Large, medium



**#840 Multi-Stones Attached to Boulders
– Rectangular**

Cairn: 3'W x 3'L

Features: 3 Rectangular slabs arranged in
shingle style

Stone sizes: Large, medium



Three overlapping stone slabs arranged in
shingle like fashion



#841 ? Natural or Cairn

Size: 5'W x 5'L

Stone sizes: Extra large, large, medium



#842 Mound on Ground

Cairn: 20''H x 2 ½'W x 3'L
Stone sizes: Large, medium



#843 Mound on Ground

Cairn: 2'H x 6'W x 8'L
Stone sizes: Large, medium
Feature: Quartz stone 1'Long



#844 Single Layer of Stones on Top of Boulder

Base stone: 6'' H x 3'W x 4'L
Stone sizes: Medium, small
Feature: Quartz stones – two medium size



#844 (Continued)



#845 Mound on Ground

Cairn: 1'H x 4'W x 5'L
Stone sizes: Large, medium, small
Feature: Quartz stone 5" Long



#846 Mound on Ground

Cairn: 14" H x 4'W x 5'L

Stone sizes: Large, medium, small

Feature: Quartz stones 6" & 8" Long



Parallel Walls

Two walls parallel each other forming what initially appears to be a “cow lane”. A short spur wall with a finished end extends partway from one wall to the other. Walking through the area, one quickly discovers the terrain is wet and the ground almost completely covered on surface with stones. It is almost impassable. This feature has no utilitarian farming function. Its function was likely ceremonial.



Arrow indicates spur wall

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

#A11 Split Stone Cairn at End of Enclosure Wall

Stone sizes: Small, Medium

The split is filled to the top and additional stones cover the top. A wall extends from the split stone to another boulder a few feet away. The wall continues curving around till it meets a tall split outcrop #A12 forming an enclosure



Low wall forms enclosure between split stone cairn A11 and split outcrop A12



#A12 Split Outcrop

A vertical split in the outcrop was filled with stones

Stone sizes: medium



#A13 Split Stone Cairn in Stream

Stream is near A11 & A12

Base stone: 3' 6" W x 4' 6" L

Stone size: Medium



#A15 Mound Attached to Stone Wall

Stone sizes: small, medium, large, extra large

A row of extra large stones parallels the stone wall. The space between the boulders and the wall was filled small and medium size stones

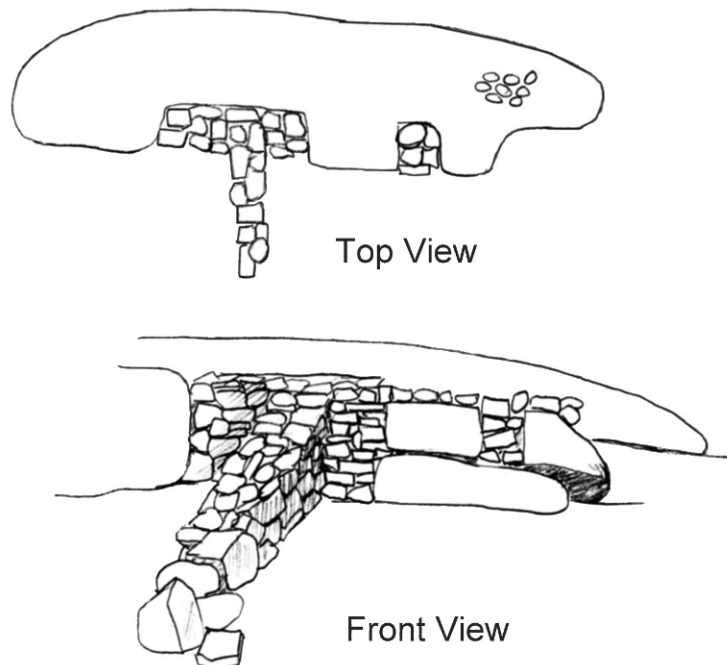


#A16 Split Stone Wall Cairn

Excerpt and drawing from *Land of a Thousand Cairns* (quoted with permission)

“A short length of stonewall juts out from the south side of a glacial outcrop. The stonewall integrates with walling placed in a wide indented space on the face of the outcrop. The two lengths of stonewall form a T shaped configuration facing south. These lengths of wall are approximately 3½ feet high. A short distance further east on the outcrop there is a second split in the face which is filled with stones. Most of the stones used in the wall had flat faces that were exposed creating a flat faced wall. A line of stones was laid across the top between the first and second splits connecting them together. The top of the outcrop behind the stone wall is covered with small stones creating a cairn. The T stonewall is therefore a split stone wall cairn.

On the north side of the outcrop a stonewall juts out for a short distance. In this area to the north and northeast there are many cairns, most contained numerous stones on top of boulders. One was a common split stone cairn.”





A16 Overall view



A16 Split in bedrock wall face filled with stones

Below Ground Structure (ceremonial)

*Listed on the map as “enclosure”

See *Land of a Thousand Cairns* for detailed description and discussion pp. 86-88, 111

Size: (approximate) 7' W x 8' L x 5' H

Sunken enclosure (building cellar like appearance)

The south wall is a single stone wide and exposed on the outside (no embankment). The wall does not provide any insulation against cold winter temperatures making the structure useless as a house cellar for storing vegetable, apples, and dairy items.

Exterior entrance

Niche at base of south wall

1 quarried stone plug & feather method embedded in east wall. This dates the structure to 1820 or later.



Overall view looking northeast. Exposed south with entrance is shown in the foreground. The upper section of south wall has been rebuilt.



Niche at bottom of south wall



Close-up of niche



Quarried field boulder (Plug & Feather Method – 1820 or later)

Water Diversion Ditch

A ditch estimated (based on the map) to be 585 feet long diverted some of the flow of a seasonal stream to the Foster sawmill pond. Water flowed through a culvert opening in the stone wall paralleling the stream into the ditch. The ditch extends to a second seasonal stream with a lower flow capacity and continues on the other side down slope to the mill pond.



Culvert under stone wall adjacent to seasonal stream



Ditch

Sawmill and Dam

The sawmill and dam were built on Canonchet Brook. The first recorded reference to the sawmill was Jonathan Foster's probate record (1869). The mill was owned by his son Lawton Foster. Jonathan had a number of logs waiting to be sawn at the time of his death according to the probate inventory. Lawton acquired the mill between 1868 and 1869. His 1868 tax assessment was \$900 and in 1869 it increased to \$1300. The increase reflects the value of the mill. The mill is shown on the 1870 Beers RI Atlas map but not on the 1895 map. The USGS Stonington quadrangle map surveyed in 1888 shows the mill pond but no mill. The house and barn are not shown either, so, this could be an oversight on the part of survey crew or cartographer. (The house and barn are shown on the 1895 map).

The mill foundation has stone blocks quarried from field boulders using the plug and feather method. This dates its construction to 1820 or later.

See *Land of a Thousand Cairns* for detailed description and discussion pp.83-85



View of the sawmill foundation from the mill dam (looking south). Arrow points to a quarried stone culvert over the brook (downstream of mill foundation).



View of the sawmill foundation from the downstream side (looking north)



Culvert made from quarried stone bars built over Canonchet Brook