

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

Formerly part of Canonchet Brook Site 9

Analysis by Mary Gage

Photos by Steve DiMarzo, Jr.

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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

NOTE: Only five cairns have been documented in this area. A walkover of the area indicated an additional 25 to 50 cairns (estimated), 1 wall building pile, 1 field clearing pile (just outside of the boundaries of the original 50 acre farm).

#2 Open-End / Closed-End on top of boulder

Base Stone: 18" H x 5' L

Cairn: 18" H x 5' L

Vertical wall surrounds cairn on three sides with small stone fill inside, one side lacks a vertical wall making it an Open / Closed design.



#3 Open-End / Closed-End on top of boulder

Base Stone: 18" H x 6' – 7' L

Cairn: 18" H x 6' L

Vertical wall on one side, large boulders on end, slants down on side opposite vertical wall (open side – no wall)



#4 Vertical wall on top of boulder

Base Stone: 7' L

Cairn: 7' L

Cairn built on flat top low base stone, short vertical walls show on two sides, other sides have large boulders



#5 Attached to side of three side by side boulders

Cairn: 6' L

A vertical wall is on two sides, third side appears collapsed, small stones were used to fill interior space between wall and boulders.



#6 Cairn on top of boulder

Cairn / Base Stone: 6' Long

Flat topped boulder slants downward. On lower part a short vertical wall was constructed to hold a low mound of small stones on top.

