

New England Antiquities Research Association



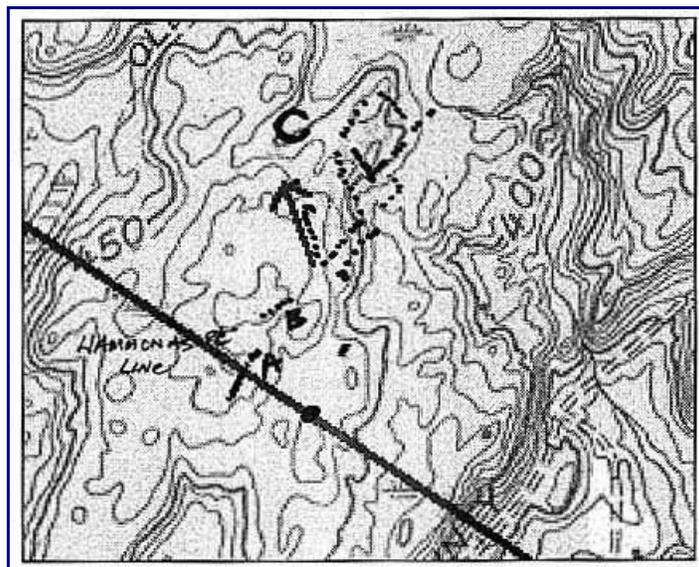
Hammonasset Line Chapter 2: North Madison Lithic Complex

A Field Report by Tom Paul

This report was initially presented at the NEARA Fall Meeting, October 19, 2001

A talk was given at the Spring 2001 **NEARA** meeting on a Summer solstice sunset line, the Hammonasset Line, going through Connecticut. The line appears to start at Montauk, Long Island and goes to at least to the Devil's Tomb Stone located just south of Hunter, NY in the Catskills. Stone structure complexes occur at intervals along this line. One location, in North Madison, Connecticut, has the most unusual large collections of stone structures. Some of these stones are large in size giving it its name of the Lithic Complex.

The Lithic Complex covers an area about 1100 feet long and about 270 feet wide or an area of about 7 acres. The complex has two stonewalls in the southern area and a large enclosure area to the northeast.



The southern area of the site starts with a 155 foot long wall heading true north along a high hill in

North Madison, CT, near the Guilford line. The western degree of the wall is at an elevation of 480 to 490 feet near the top of the hill site. The eastern side of the southern wall drops about 10 to 15 feet. A second wall 70 feet long starts 150 directly north of the southern wall. This wall heads in the direction of the summer solstice sun rise, 70° magnetic northeast, mNE. There is a large enclosure about 150 feet to the northeast of the north wall in the direction of 70° mNE. The eastern and western walls of the enclosure are in the 70° mNE direction. The southern wall of the enclosure runs at a direction of 355° mN and the northern wall runs about 320° mNW. The enclosure has many large cairns inside.

Details of these areas follow:

Southern Wall

The southern wall is 155 feet long pointing true north. The wall is composed of large stones many being long. These stones were laid so that many open area were made, areas that look like bridges. The western side of the wall is relatively flat where the eastern side drops down about 10 or 15 feet.



Southern Wall - View A



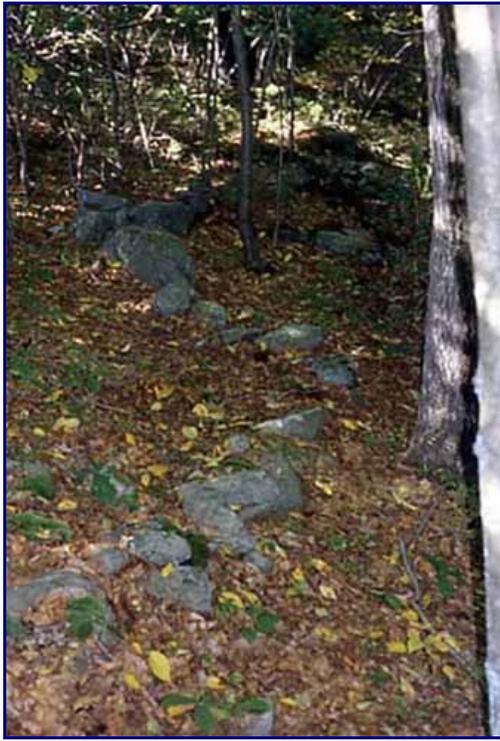
Southern Wall - View B

The area just east of the wall is filled with large stones covering the ground for a distance of about 35 feet. It looks as if this was a form of lithic landscaping. This stone cover stops after 35 feet and no stones are on the area south of the wall. Midway just east of the stone cover is a pointed stone in the direction of about 138° mSE, toward the winter solstice sunrise.



Lithic Landscaping

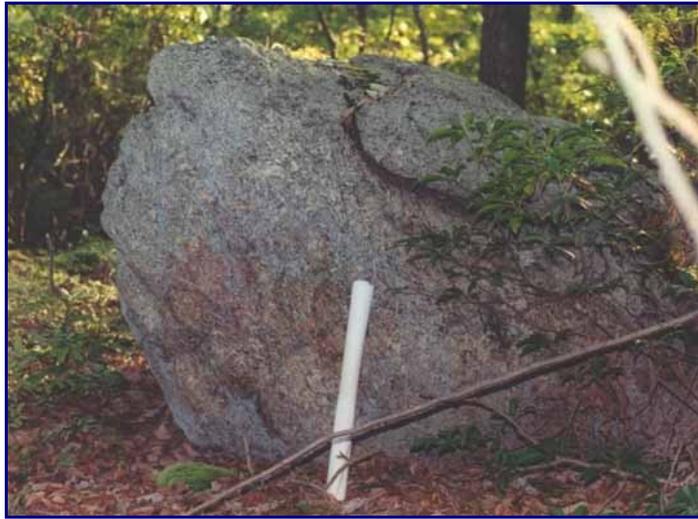
Immediately past the north end of the stonewall lies a one stone high wall in the shape of a snake. This curved stone path is about 30 feet long ending with a large flat triangular rock. This is called Snake #1. There is a second large triangular stone 4 feet past this first flat stone. Then there is a second curved one high stone path that continues true north with is 37 feet long. This is Snake #2. Just past this is a third stone path about 44 feet long. This is Snake #3. The northern wall starts about 5 feet from Snake #3.



Snake #1

Hammonasset Line

The Hammonasset Line runs over Snake #1 just north of the southern wall. There are several markers on the Line before the southern wall line pointing true north. There is a large boulder on the line about 150 southeast to the wall. About 100 feet east of the wall on the Line is located a standing stone. Then about 50 feet away are two standing stones mostly made of white quartz. There is a square stone structure just in front of these cairns that looks like a small prayer seat, like the one seen in Killingworth also on the HL line. There are a number of cairns located on the Line northwest of the southern wall.



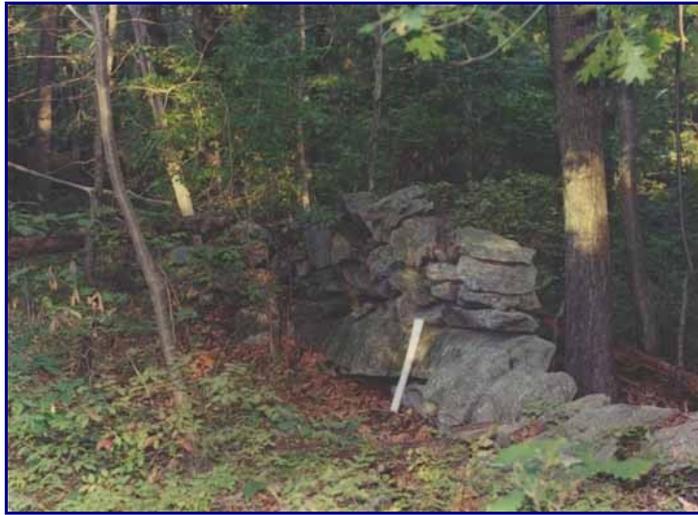
Large Boulder on Hammonasset Line



Standing Stone on Hammonasset Line

Northern Wall

The Northern wall starts 5 feet north of Snake #3. This wall starts directly north of the southern wall. The southern tip of the northern wall curves eastward for about 15 feet. It then goes straight for about 70 feet in the direction of 70° mNE, the direction of the summer solstice sunrise.

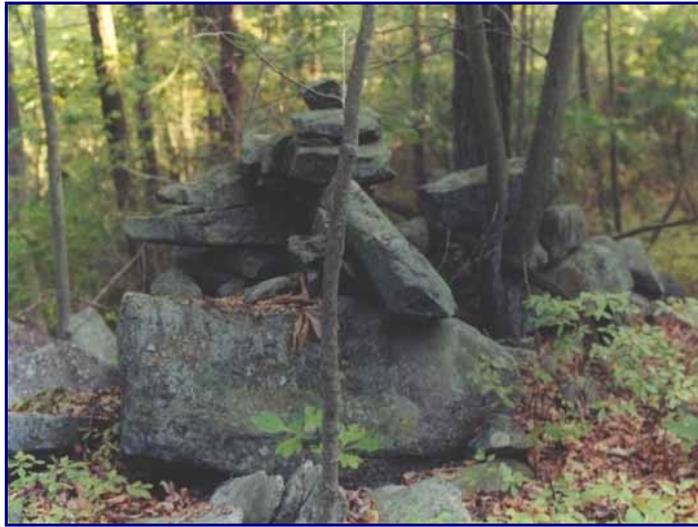


Northern Wall

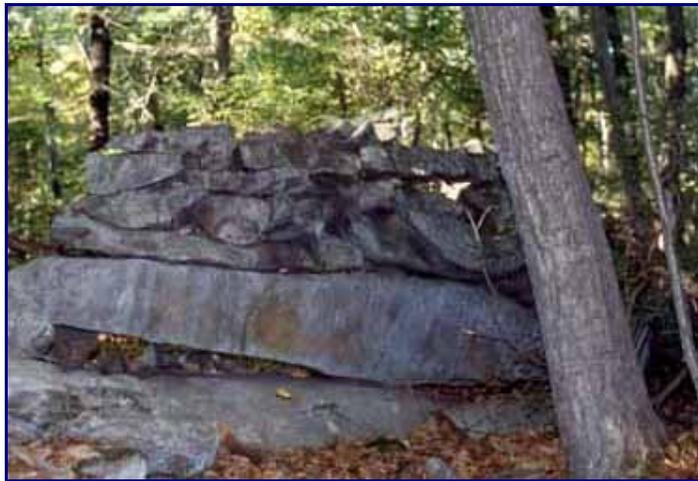
There is an extension of the southern tip of this wall that make a bridge opening that faces the winter solstice sunset position. This was observed on a **NEARA** trip in 1998 near the end of November. The northern wall is made of large long stones, similar to the southern wall. This wall is on the top of the local hill, about 500 feet elevation.



Winter Solstice Bridge Opening



Winter Solstice Arch



Large Stones in Northern Wall

The land on the southeast side of the wall has large stone on the ground similar to the southern wall but not as large an area. Just west of the southern tip of the straight part of the north wall is a large stone laid on another stone. The top stone has large pieces of quarts in its top surface. There are about 6 cairns just west of this location.

Another curved one-high stone path starts just north of the northern wall in the same direction for about 80 feet. This is called Snake #4. Just north of Snake #4 there is a wide wall for about 40 feet. This wall is not to connect to anything other stone structure. The southern corner of the enclosure starts about 70 feet northeast, 70° mNE of Snake #3.

Enclosure

The enclosure area covers about 3.2 acres. The southeastern wall of the enclosure is about 630 feet long and in the same line and direction of the northern wall, 70° mNE. This is the same direction as the opposite wall. This enclosure has two travel ways, an upper cairn field and a lower cairn field.

Travel Ways

The enclosure has two travel ways or roads. The first and largest is about 320 feet long and about 60 feet wide. Large stonewall line both sides of the large travel way. The wall on the northern side is curved. This way is almost free of stones and gives the impression of a "Grand Avenue". The second way starts at the end of the Grand Way and travels north to the other side of the enclosure, about 220 feet. The walls on the way are about 25 to 35 feet across. This northeast way, the "Northway", splits the site in half creating an upper field and a lower field.



Grand Avenue

Upper Cairn Field

The upper cairn field is about 20 feet by 250 feet. It slopes down to the west wall of the Northway. There are 33 large cairns in this section. Most of these are still partially formed. The trees have damaged many parts of wall and formed cairns. The cairns tend to line up in rows following the direction of the west enclosure wall. Some cairns are built up on ledges. Almost all have white quartz rocks on the top. There is a sub wall coming of the northern wall of the Grand Avenue midway along this wall, which goes off into the upper cairn field.



Upper Cairn Field

Lower Cairn Field

The lower cairn field starts east of the lower Northway wall and east of the Grand Avenue. The elevation drops considerably at this wall, 20 to 30 feet. The lower cairn field has about 44 cairns. Most of these cairns are large and some are still nicely formed. Some are 6 feet high. There are three small stone enclosures on or near the eastern wall of the Northway. This is the sloped area. The most northern enclosure looks like a place to store horses, long and narrow. There are three additional enclosures located at the line where the slopes start to level off. These square rock enclosures do not look like colonial cellar holes seen other places in town. The northern square is about 20 feet by 20 feet with no sign of a fireplace. About 75 feet south of this square is a near square dugout area in the bottom of the hill to form a pit. Just east of this pit is a 15 by 15 foot square, a few stones high, with a rock pile behind it. Twenty five feet east of this is a dug stone lined well. This is the most colonial looking item on the site. The remaining is filled with cairns. The cairns again tend to line up in the direction of the lower wall, 320° mNW. The enclosure walls in the lower area are large with a few open spaces.



Lower Cairn Field

Site History

The North Madison Lithic Complex is located in an open space track 1000's of acres and is owned by the Regional Water Authority. The water company purchased this land in the 1930's or before. The ownership is being investigated. The important town history book, **The History of Guilford and Madison**, by Steiner (\cong 1897) does not mention this immediate area. Steiner does say that the Hammonasset Indians lived in North Madison when the colonial people first used the Summer Hill Road area, about 1730. He discussed an area location about one mile south that had a colonial development called the Genesee Track. This development is from a period of 1770's to about 1840. There are two colonial cellar holes south of the Lithic Complex site on County Road. One is directly south located on the road about 2000 feet away and the other is about a half a mile away. I have talked to one of the town's historians, Warner Lord, who does not know any history about this area. All the people I have talked to have not been aware this site existed. Warner Lord visited the site a few weeks ago and thought that the southern wall could have built by colonial people to keep their cattle off the rocky slope area referred to as the Lithic Landscaping. He had no comment about the enclosure or it's cairns. He thought that the well in the lower part of the enclosure was colonial.

Theories

If the site was all colonial it was probably built the same time of the Genesee Track. It is difficult to believe that one farmer built all the walls and stone structures. For what purpose did they build the complex?

It is could have been developed through many time periods. Possibly starting the Hammonasset Line passing by. There appears to be many astronomical alignments on the site. These are:

1. South wall to true north
2. North wall to the summer solstice sunrise

3. Arch on North wall to winter solstice sunset
4. Two Enclosure wall to the summer solstice sunrise
5. Mid marker on South wall lithic landscaping pointing to winter solstice sunrise
6. Hammonasset Line passing just north of the South wall
7. Snake 1 to 3 pointing true north and Snake 4 point summer solstice sunrise

There are probably many other astronomical alignments. While observing the west wall in the Enclosure the thought of the Milky Way came to me.

What does the cairns mean? They could be burial markers or astronomical markers, stars in the heavens. Could the occupants using the well be from people have Native American and half colonial? Native American probably built at least the snake stone markers.

It is felt that the well and square forms in the lower cairn field came much later than the upper walls. The more one searches the more question arise. Stay tuned for the next chapter.

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