

New England Antiquities Research Association



Hammonasset Line Chapter 1: A Summer Solstice Sunset Line

A Field Report by Tom Paul

This is Part 1 of a multipart series initially presented at the NEARA Spring Meeting, March 30, 2001

In the upper Summer Hill Road area in the town of Madison, Connecticut exists many pre-colonial stone structures. The town is located on Long Island Sound in mid Connecticut and once was part of the town of Guilford, incorporated in 1639. The area of the initial study is in the northern part of the town on the eastern border of Killingworth and the Hammonasset Reservoir. This was the last section of Guilford settled, in 1730. Northern Guilford and Madison are not good places to farm. There are too many rocks and not enough good soil. Today the Region Water Authority owns much of this land having purchased most of it in the 1930's. The land has been relatively undisturbed for the past 400 years. The Hammonasset Indians occupied the land before the 1730 colonial period. These Indians lived on the west side of the Connecticut River to the Hammonasset River along the Sound. They also resided westward of that river in North Madison and North Guilford to Bluff Head.



Map of Hammonasset Line

A study of stone structures was started in this area in 1996 after observing a 5-foot high neatly formed stone structure the shape of a whale viewed from the south side of my home. Having moved into the area the year before, I found the structures unusual and interesting. Investigation of the area's many stone structures disclosed cairns, formed cairns, shaped boulders, unusual walls, dolmans, prayer seats and possible chambers. There are two ridges located just east and west of this whale cairn. The eastern ridge has several large flat rocks on the top that might have been used as viewing platforms. Looking down in the northwest direction one can see the whale cairn. Past the cairn in the same direction lies another small ridge where a notch can be seen in the distant hills. Following this line on the second ridge one can see Bluff Head through the notch in the distance, 5 to 6 miles away. Bluff Head is a 720' elevation hill located in North Guilford.

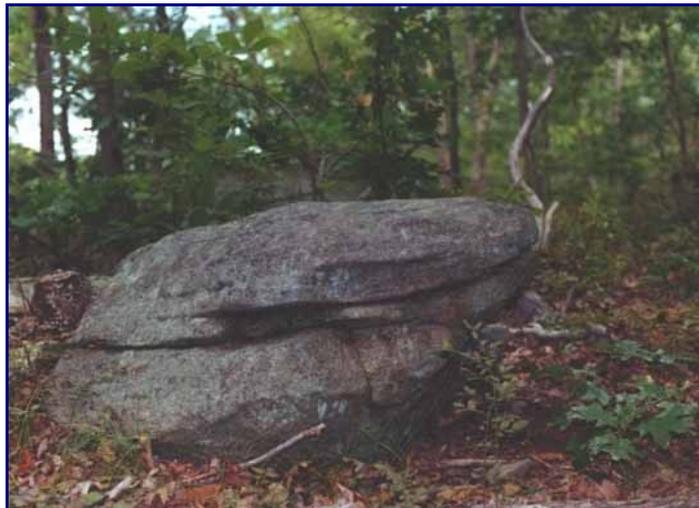
Near Tom's House, Hammonasset Line:



Stone "Whale" Cairn on Hammonasset Line



Possible Viewing Platforms Hammonasset Line



Duck Bill Stone on Hammonasset Line

Rock Points at Summer Solstice Sunrise

At the Summer Hill Road ridge observation point, elevation at 400', the summer solstice sunset can be seen going down on Bluff Head, at 318.5° magnetic north. A theory of these stone placements was evolved after walking in either direction along the summer solstice line. After walking nine miles along this line and finding many stone structures it became obvious that this marked a summer solstice line. There are probably more than a thousand separate stone structures on or near this nine-mile long line.

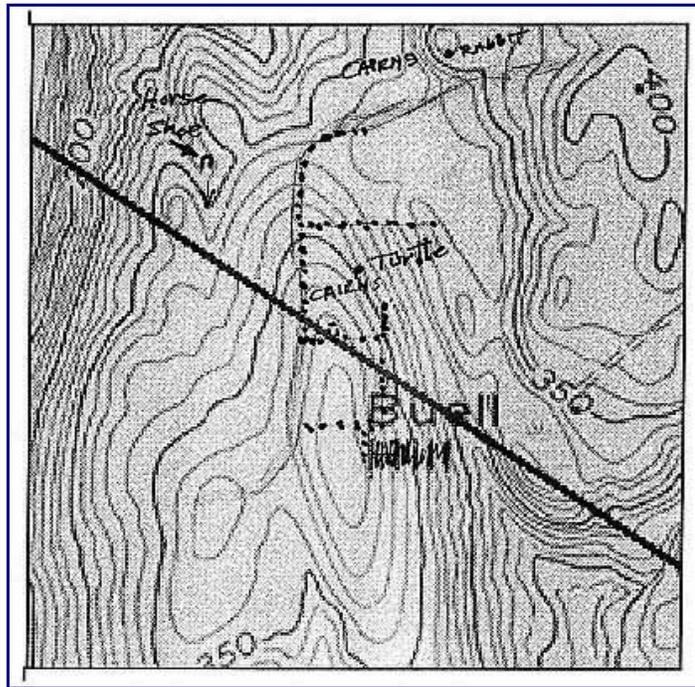
Bluff Head Location Pictures, Madison, Hammonasset Line:



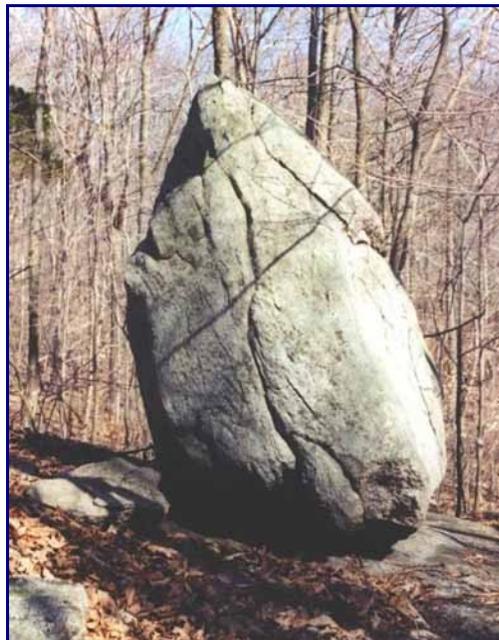
Summer Solstice Sunset Over Bluff Head

Extending the line outward it leads to Montauk, Long Island to the southeast and to the Catskills in New York State in the northwest direction. Following the line from Montauk it passes by the edge of Gardner Island and Plum Island across the Long Island Sound to Old Saybrook, CT at Cornfield Point. This point is where the Indians had a cornfield where there are stone markers at and near this point. The line moves inland across Westbrook through a camp area on the Westbrook-Clinton border. Following the line it moves to Killingworth and crosses one hill location, 400' elevation, where there are three very large formed cairns and several smaller formed cairns. A few stone turtles, located about 100 feet north of a large stone formed cairn 8' x 12' x 6', are on flat rocks, one of which is still in good condition. About 1000 feet north of this spot is located a large cairn field.

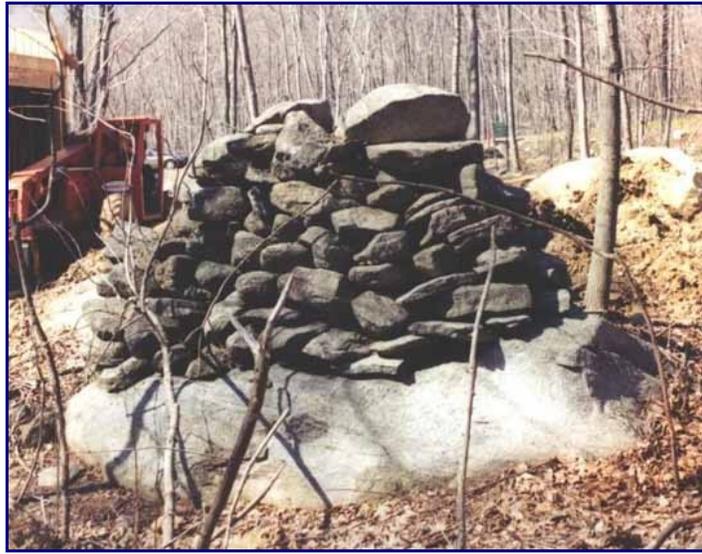
Killingworth Hilltop Location Map & Pictures, Hammonasset Line:



Map of Killington Hilltop



7 Foot Boulder on Hill Section of Line



Cairn on Hill Section of Line



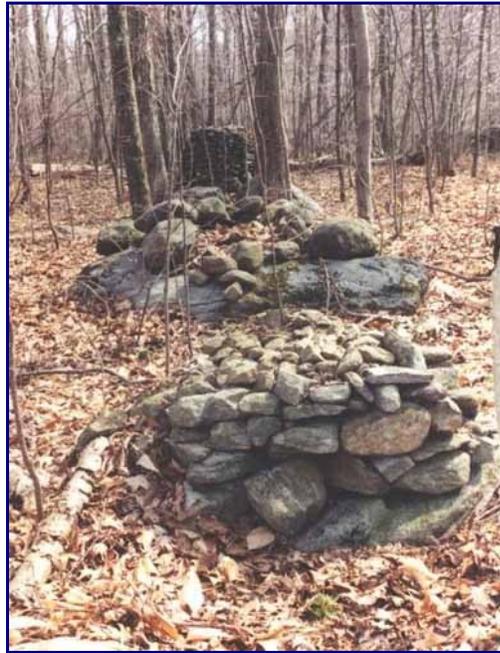
Large Cairn Complex on Hill Section of Line



Large Cairn on Hill Section of Line



Stone Turtle on Hill Section of Line



Line of Cairns on Hill Section of Line

Moving in the direction of state route 80 several cairns and boulders mark the way. Just north of route 80 the line is marked with many stone boulders, cairns and stonewalls. It crosses over to North Madison at the Hammonasset Reservoir, then crossing Summer Hill Road in North Madison. This area has hundreds of stone structure including cairns, formed cairns, unusual walls and marking boulders. This area around the ridge of Summer Hill Road, Smokie's Ridge, must have been important to the Native American Indians for a long time. Crossing Summer Hill Road to the ridge mentioned before it crosses a brook and up a lower ridge then drops down across a pond. The line passes through the notches of several ridges across route 79 in North Madison.

East Madison Area Pictures, Hammonasset Line:



"Prayer Seat", Just North of Hammonasset Line



Lone Wall in Woods, Ends on Hammonasset Line



**Summer Solstice Sunset Viewing Platform
Hammonasset Line**



6 Foot High, Points True North, Hammonasset Line



Perched Boulder, Hammonasset Line



Large Perched Boulder, Hammonasset Line

About 1000 feet in north west of Rt.79 the line crosses a field of cairns and a very large marking boulder. After passing through a wetland and another ridge it crosses a ridge with another field of cairns.

Central Madison Area Pictures, Hammonasset Line:

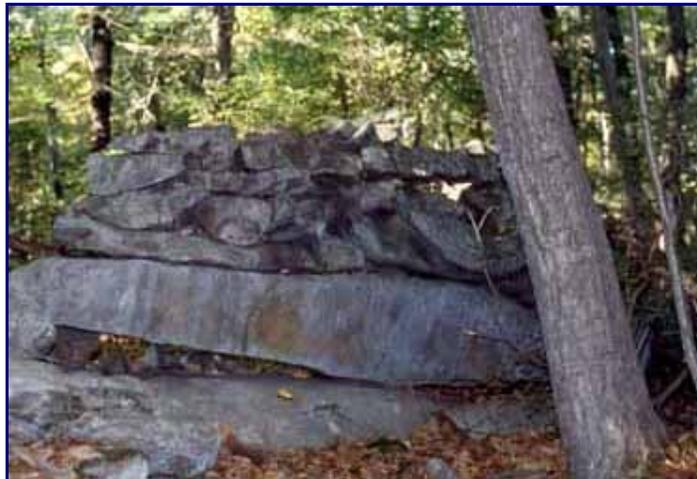


Cairn Field on Hammonasset Line

Next it crosses another wetland to a larger ridge, about 500' elevation, where there is a large complex of stone structures. The line then crosses into North Guilford to Bluff Head. Bluff Head is the highest elevation in this coastal area. One can see all of eastern Long Island including Montauk, almost 50 miles away. There are cairns, set boulders and a calendar wall on Bluff Head.

The line crosses over a valley to another ridge in eastern Wallingford where there are set boulders and cairns. From the top of this ridge one can view the large ridge system in the northwest that border IS 84. The line passes a notch in this large ridge and crosses Cheshire and Waterbury. It continues to Mount Tom, which is located just west of Litchfield and then crosses over into New York State passing by Red Hook to the Catskills by Hunter. There is a large standing stone on the line just before Hunter that is called the Devil's Tombstone.

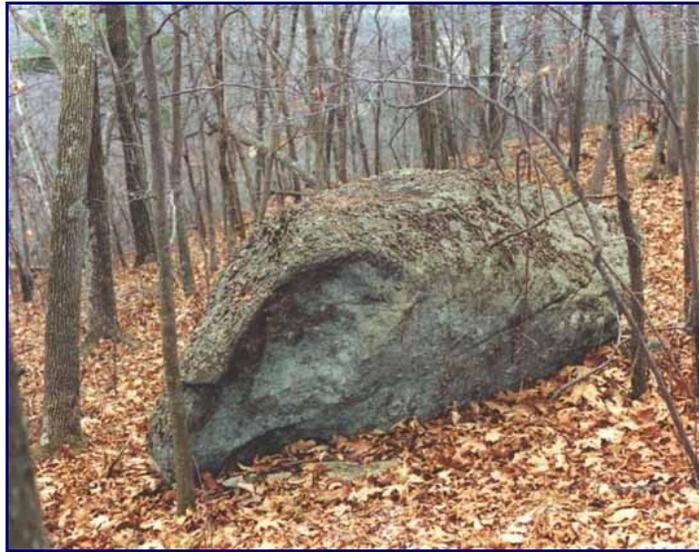
Further Location Pictures, Hammonasset Line:



Lithic Complex, Near Guilford, Hammonasset Line



Lithic Complex, Near Guilford, Hammonasset Line



Stone Eagle Effigy, Mt. Tom, Hammonasset Line

Many questions arise when thinking about this solstice sunset line:

Why was the line built?

How old is the line?

Who built the line?

How important was this line?

How many different groups of people mark and observe the line?

Why are there stone complexes located next to the line?

Why are there short segments of lines parallel to the main line?

Does this line connect to other lines?

Does this line extend to other parts of the world?

Did only local inhabitants know the existence line or did people from distance points know about it?

The study of this solstice line will require years to find answers. I feel that this line is ancient, thousands of years old.

There seems to be some common threads along this line. There seems to be some complex about every three miles. The complexes are north of the line such as cairn fields. Some stonewalls are at the end at the line. The line does not seem to be a set width; it appears to vary in width. The actual solstice sunset line should be moving in a southern direction at this time due to precession. This means that the line from the past is located northward from the current sunset line. Some walls and marking boulders point to 70° magnetic northeast, the summer solstice sunrise.

The winter solstice sunrises occurs on the same line as the summer solstice sunset. The Summer Hill Road line crossing viewing platform can see a long distance southeast because of a notch in the hills. A viewer from Bluff Head can see the sunrise over Montauk and a Mount Tom viewer could see the sun rise over Bluff Head in the winter solstice. Of all the sites on the line Summer Hill Road has more items on both sides of the line. It is believed the Summer Hill Road is an old Indian path. It is a ridge path just west and parallel to the Hammonasset River.

Future project are to extend the search along the line and to do more detail on the complexes. The first complex to detail will be on the high ridge in North Madison near the Guilford line. Stay tuned for the next chapter.

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