

Blueberry Panel

The small cluster of stone piles at this site is representative of the usual density of such features scattered along this southerly flank of the Nashoba Brook. A short distance southwest of this site, there are three clusters of stone piles and other features where the density of stone piles is unusually large. Each site is marked with an informational panel.

Stone pile groupings such as these, known in Algonquian as *káhtôquwuk*, were often created by Native Americans to memorialize an important event, death, or person. In other circumstances, stone piles, earthen mounds, or stone rows were constructed as part of an astronomical/ceremonial complex to establish sight-lines to mark significant astronomical events such as the solstice sunrise or sunset.

They have also been interpreted as a way of signaling an Indian's intention to reinforce his bond with Mother Earth. As the hiker progresses westward along the Trail toward the Plantain Cluster, additional piles may be seen, obscured within a brushy area, or nestled in a small level patch off the Trail.

To designate an area as ceremonially important, another type of stone feature, called *sun catcapinumut* in Algonquian, is occasionally seen, often far from modern trails. Such a feature, originally, was a single boulder with a fault line, deposited by the receding glacier. Over eons of freezing and thawing, this boulder might be broken apart at the fault line. Such split boulders are recognizable by the matching faces at the resulting cleft. [See figure 7]

Evidence that such a pair was selected by Native Americans to designate an important ceremonial site lies in the presence of one or more small rocks placed into the cleft. Such rocks may be of different material and color from the host boulder/pair. The smaller rocks may be angular or rounded. There is one such prominent enhanced stone pair within the Princess Pine stone pile cluster's enclosure a quarter mile to the southwest.

The presence of stone piles and other stone features throughout these woodlands demonstrates the Native Americans' belief that the natural world is imbued with a spiritual quality. Such structures exemplify the Indian practice, here in the Northeast and elsewhere in North America, of subtly enhancing naturally occurring features of the landscape rather than building large, prominent structures that intrude upon that natural landscape.

Skeptics might argue that these enhanced pairs are the recent work of Boy Scouts or other naturally curious people. However, consider the fact that these *enhanced* pairs do not occur in large numbers anywhere in these conservation lands, as the stone piles occasionally do, but are scattered throughout the woodlands, and elsewhere, far from modern trails.

Blueberry inset on the panel:

The blueberry, *vaccinium corymbosum*, as well as other berries, was a significant food resource for Native Americans of this region. Large areas where the bushes grew well were cleared of trees, and the bushes were burned annually to promote a good crop. In allocating lands to families of his band or tribe, the sachem allotted berry patches as well as crop fields, and hunting and fishing grounds.