United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY NOTIFICATION

National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

Name of Property: The Turners Falls Sacred Ceremonial Hill Site (Formerly, The Airport Improvement Project – Turners Falls Municipal Airport)

Location: Franklin County **State:** Massachusetts

Request submitted by: John C. Silva, Manager, Environmental Programs, FAA, New England Division

Date received: 05/25/2007 **Additional information received** 11/07/2008

Opinion of the State Historic Preservation Officer:

_Eligible X_Not Eligible _No Response _Need More Information

Comments:

The Secretary of the Interior has determined that this property is:

X_Eligible **Applicable criteria:** A, D _Not Eligible

Comment: See attached comments.

_Documentation insufficient
(Please see accompanying sheet explaining additional materials required)

Janet Snyder Matthews
Keeper of the National Register

Date: 12/11/2008

WASO-28

The United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Determination of Eligibility Comment Sheet

Property Name: The Turners Falls Sacred Ceremonial Hill Site (Formerly, The Airport Improvement Project-Turners Falls Municipal Airport)
Franklin County, Massachusetts

Secretary of the Interior Findings: Eligible, Criteria A and D

Comments:

INTRODUCTION

On May 21, 2007, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) submitted a request for a formal determination of eligibility (DOE) to the National Register of Historic Places, pursuant to federal regulations 36 CFR 63. This request was in response to a disagreement between the FAA and two official consulting parties, the Narragansett Tribe and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah), over the identification and potential significance of stone features located at Turners Falls Municipal Airport (the Airport). The FAA maintained that the four stone piles are features associated with the remains of a nineteenth-century rock wall construction project; the Tribes maintain that the stone features are components of a traditional cultural place (TCP), known as a "sacred ceremonial hill,"and include the four visible stone piles and an extended row of stacked stones; further research may reveal additional features.

In June 2007, Paul Loether, Chief of the National Register of Historic Places and the National Historic Landmarks Programs, made a site visit, accompanied by members of the Narragansett Tribe. In July 2007, the National Register found that the documentation submitted by the FAA was insufficient to determine the eligibility of the stone piles as a TCP or any type of historic or precontact property under any of the National Register Criteria. We provided comments to the FAA that detailed the information that was needed to make a decision and encouraged FAA to work with any interested Tribes and/or parties to provide that information to us.

On April 24, 2008, members of the Narragansett tribe met with Paul Loether and National Register staff in Washington D.C. to discuss the determination of eligibility and show National Register staff an independent film entitled, *Hidden Landscapes*[1], that records, through the medium of film, an oral history with the tribes about the sacred ceremonial hill and a larger ethnographic and cultural landscape of sacred significance.

[1] *Hidden Landscapes* is now the name of the film series.

On November 11, 2008, the Massachusetts State Historic Preservation Office submitted a written copy of their opinion that explained why they believe the property is not eligible for the National Register.

1) CRITERIA A AND D

The Turners Falls sacred ceremonial hill site at the Turners Falls Airport is a traditional cultural place that is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and D. The property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Narragansett, Aquinnah-Wampanoag, and Mashpee-Wampanoag history. The property may also be significant to other tribes of the northeastern United States. Located in the middle Connecticut River region of New England, this site also possesses the potential to yield important information about traditional Native American practices, beliefs, and sacred rituals.

The Turners Falls sacred ceremonial hill site meets the characteristics of a traditional cultural place as defined in the National Register Bulletin, *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties*. Specifically, the property is associated with several living, traditional groups that existed historically and have continued to practice traditional ways up to the present. These groups share cultural practices, customs, and beliefs rooted in their history. Those practices, customs, and beliefs continue to be practiced today and are important in maintaining the groups' continuing cultural identities. Additionally, these groups transmit and pass down the shared cultural practices, customs, and beliefs that are associated with this place. It is also important to note here that the long period of disuse due to forced abandonment, with use beginning again just recently, does not make the property ineligible for the National Register. The *National Register Bulletin, Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Traditional Cultural Properties*, notes that the fact that a property has little continuous time depth does not make the property ineligible; the property's association with the traditional activity reflected in its contemporary use is what must be considered in determining eligibility. This includes recent revitalization of traditional sacred practices at a place that may have been abandoned in the past for various reasons (Parker and King 1998, p. 18).

The site is a highly significant "prayer hill" containing stone features, and is referred to by the tribes as a "sacred ceremonial hill." The site is central to the cosmology of the combined tribes and the traditions that have marked Native American sacred and ceremonial practices for numerous generations. This site directly links modern-day tribes, most of whom share similar Algonquin-based language and culture, with their ancestral origins and long-standing cultural traditions. The tribes named above are direct descendants of those who traditionally gathered at the site of Wissatinnewag-Peskeompscut/Turners Falls for sacred ceremonial purposes, as well as seasonal subsistence activities (fishing, hunting, and farming). In addition the site may have sacred meaning to other tribes of the northeastern United States, including the Western Abenaki, Nipmuck, Wabenaki, and Mahican, who in part are believed to have common ancestry with the tribes of the Pocumtuck Confederacy (including the Pocumtucks, Nonotucks, and Norrotucks) who occupied the middle Connecticut River Valley at the

time of first contact and Anglo-American settlement. Representatives of all of these tribes had gathered at Wissatinnewag-Peskeompscut and nearby Squaqheag/Northfield at the time of the Turners Falls Massacre/Falls Fight of May 19, 1676. This event signified an important turning point in the conflicts between Indian tribes and Anglo-American settlers in the New World and brought an end to what seems to have been a long period of Native American settlement, farming, and seasonal encampment in the middle Connecticut River Valley.

The dispersal of Indian tribes to other parts of New England, Canada, and New York, was followed by an era of cultural suppression in which Indians not only were denied access to traditional hunting and fishing grounds but also became disconnected from their sacred ceremonial places. As Tribal Chairwoman and past THPO of the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah), Cheryl Andrews-Maltais, explained: "The traditions and the ceremonies started to subside. We were not allowed to go to these places. There were prohibitions written on the books (laws) to stop us from going to these places. Additionally, if the people would not adopt and accept Christianity and still continued the practices, those practitioners were usually taken away. And if they kept going to the site, even without the leadership or practitioners or the holy people or the spiritual leaders, then the places were destroyed... to eradicate them from current day memory."(interview: *The Great Falls 2008*).

The stone features are shown through oral traditions (both Native and Anglo-American), documentary history, and recent verification activities by the Narragansett, Wampanoag, and affiliated tribes, to be interrelated, constructed features utilized by Native American tribes for ceremonial purposes in conjunction with calendar observations based on the positions of the sun and a cosmology that has assigned sacred meaning to the natural environment, astronomical events, traditional medicinal practices, and spirits, including the all powerful spirit Cautantowwit, who is considered both the source of life and guardian of all beings in the afterlife and has his home in the Southwest (Bragdon, 1996; *The Great Falls* 2008). Surviving present-day, federally recognized tribes acknowledge that the grouping of stone features here is the central component of a ceremonial landscape, which is defined by the "viewscape" visible from this observation point and interrelated points to the south and west, [redacted] (D. Harris 2008; *The Great Falls* 2008). Celestial observations made by tribal members, tribal representatives, scientific analysts, and field researchers, in August 2007 revealed that the observation point marked by the stone features was aligned with the setting sun [redacted] during the height of the Perseid meteorite shower. The passage of the meteorite shower from northeast to southwest during this astronomical event is of great importance in the cosmology of Eastern tribes (Scope of Work 2008; *The Great Falls* 2008). These observations coincided with the mid-August Celebration, which has been an annual event of the Narragansett tribe for more than three hundred recorded years (332, according to the colonial calendar).

The sacred ceremonial hill at Turners Falls Airport is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places because:

1) It is one of an undetermined number of traditional cultural places in the middle Connecticut Valley that can be documented through oral history, historical record, archeological data, and ongoing research to be associated with the sacred practices and beliefs of the various Native American tribes that either lived in the middle Connecticut River Valley or that traveled to the area to partake in seasonal activities and traditional rituals. The National Register eligibility of member sites can be evaluated individually as part of a multiple property group or through a district nomination.

2) It is an archeological site that contributes to a National Register eligible expansion of the Riverside Archeological District (NR 1975); this expansion encompasses a significant concentration of precontact archeological sites on the south/east side of the Connecticut River in the town of Montague, [redacted], and portions of Montague Plain that were traversed by the north to south Indian Trail. In addition to its location on the Connecticut River, a major transportation corridor for Native Americans, this enlarged district also includes the confluence of the Millers River, a major waterway that provided east and west movement across the northern tier of Massachusetts.

3) In addition, the ceremonial hill may be one of a group of traditional cultural places forming a rural historic landscape made up of natural features important in cultural beliefs and origin stories and sites related to sacred ceremonial rituals, including but not limited to astronomical observations, gathering of medicinal herbs, and funerary practices. Within the context of other related features, the ceremonial hill has the potential to yield important information to Native American tribes about their origins, relationship to spirits, and traditional sacred practices. Many of the sacred connections to this pauwau (medicine) district may have been severely stressed, and some may have been lost due to cultural suppression during and after King Philip's War of 1675-76 in the mid-seventeenth century.[2] Ongoing research, which includes astronomical observations from the Turners Falls site and a survey of related stone features throughout the region, is contributing to the reaffirmation of traditional practices and sacred precepts and rituals related to this and other sites.

This determination of eligibility is based on a review of the documents provided by the FAA and the consulting tribes, as well as a review of historical accounts; related National Register nominations; oral history by elders, Tribal Historic Preservation Offices, and tribal spokespersons; recent scholarship in history, anthropology, and archeology; an independent film (*The Great Falls* 2008); and websites relating to Connecticut River history, Native American history and traditions, and the typology of stone features associated with Native American ceremonial practices.

[2] The Wampanoag chief sachem Metacom was known to the colonists as King Philip.

2) A CONTEXT FOR CEREMONIAL LANDSCAPE FEATURES IN THE CONNECTICUT RIVER VALLEY

General

Verified by the archeological record, the area along the middle Connecticut/Quinnetticott River, extending from Ashuelot/Hinsdale, New Hampshire, and Brattleboro, Vermont, south to Northhampton and Hadley, Massachusetts, is associated with more than 12,000 years of human use and activity centered on the River as a source of sustenance, transportation, commerce, communication, and spiritual fulfillment. The tribes believe they have used the area from time immemorial. This area can be seen as a large, connected, cultural landscape that includes related historic sites, traditional cultural places, and archeological sites. Stone features, such as the ones evaluated here, may be integral parts of these properties. Historical accounts, Native American oral history, and archeological data support the long-standing value of this region for its abundance of fish, fertile meadows and bottomlands for farming, and forest resources for hunting. These sources also corroborate the Native American reverence for the region's distinctive topography of river, hills, streams, and cataracts, as well as the use of the land and river in the vicinity of Wissatinnewag-Peskeompscut/Turners Falls for sacred ceremonial purposes.

Much of the diverse cultural heritage of this area is related to nationally important themes of American precontact history and history as defined by the National Park Service's Thematic Framework, including Peopling Places, Expressing Cultural Values, and Transforming the Environment. A number of previously recognized National Register eligible archeological sites in the area document the continuity of human occupation of the area from the Paleoindian and other eras.

1) Documentation of Paleoindian sites of importance in understanding the lifeways and patterns of the Earliest Americans can be found in The Earliest Americans Theme Study, NHL Program, 2004.(See also: http://www.nps.gov/history/archeology/EAM/index.htm). These include the Dedic Site (NR) in South Deerfield and the Hanneman Site (Nassaney 1999)[redacted]

2) Continuum of Native American occupation and use from the Paleoindian period up until 1676—the date marking the dominance of Anglo-American settlement in the region and the dispersal of Native American groups (north to Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, and Canada or west to the Hudson River Valley). This continuum is demonstrated in the stratification of sites (from Paleoindian to Late Woodland) making up the Riverside Archeological District (NR 1975), which covers a 674-acre area on the north and west banks of the Connecticut River in the towns of Gill and Greenfield and includes Wissatinnewag and the now-submerged area known as Barton's Cove (Nassaney 1999). Wissatinnewag, known as the place of the shining or slippery rocks, is located atop the bluffs in Greenfield; an Indian fishing station, the site is linked to the water's edge by a series of trails (D. Harris, conference call, October 27, 2008; Dudek et al. 2002).

Stratified sites also exist on the opposite river bank [redacted]

3) The Pocumtuck Confederacy occupied the lands in the middle Connecticut River Valley in the 1660s. According to Sheldon (1895), the confederation included the following tribes, each acting as an autonomous community: the Pocumtucks who occupied the land in the present-day towns of Deerfield, Montague, and Greenfield; Nonotucks in the vicinity of current day Hadley and Northhampton, the Podunks at Windsor (Conn.), the Warranokes (also spelled Woronoco) along the Westfield River, Tunxis at Farmington (Conn.), and the Squaheags at Northfield (Sheldon, p. 48). According to one scholar, the seventeenth century was a period of socio-political instability for the member tribes: "Patterns of alliance sometimes shifted rapidly....Ties between communities were forged, strengthened, weakened and/or ruptured under the pressures, constraints and opportunities that arose from the fur and wampum trade, epidemics, European settlement, and wars (E. Johnson 1999, p.158)." According to another ethnohistorian, these tribes shared an "underlying cosmology, similar languages, and a long history," this included a common search for connectedness with spirits, called "manitou" and defined as "the impersonal force that permeated the world, observable in anything marvelous, beautiful, or dangerous" (Bragdon 1996).

4) Both Native American oral history and Anglo-American literature of the nineteenth century (based in large part on "pioneer" oral tradition) substantiate that the portion of the river above the rapids, particularly the area surrounding Wissatinnewag-Peskeompscut and the area above and below the falls were known as abundant fishing grounds and intertribal gathering places in the Spring when the shad and salmon came upriver to spawn. Hosted by the Pocumtuck, tribes from many parts of New England gathered here at this time to harvest fish and for related ceremonies and celebrations (Nussaney 1999; Bruchau 2006; D. Harris 2008; Scope of Work 2008; *The Great Falls*, 2008). The return of the anadromous fish each year signified to the tribes the cyclic renewal of nature and a connnectedness with the earth mother. The area west of the river, also called Pocumtuck, was settled by Anglo-Americans in 1669 and renamed Deerfield; for many years, Indians returned to the area in hopes of reclaiming it.

The Pocumtuck tribe was known for its successful use of the broad meadows at Deerfield, Greenfield and Northfield for cultivating corn, squash, and beans, and for its storage of food in underground granaries many of which were found by settlers in the surrounding landscape (Sheldon 1895, pp. 76-77; Thomas 1976; Bruchac 2006; Bragdon 1996; Melvoin 1989). Sheldon explains the bounty offered by the river, arable fields, berry thickets, and wild forests as the primary reason Peskeompscut was selected by Indian leaders for what appears to have been intended as a permanent settlement in 1675-1676; he wrote "Nowhere else could provisions for the summer and stores for the winter be so easily procured (Sheldon 1895, p.145)." In May 1676, the Indians who gathered at

Wissatinnewag-Peskeompscut had already cultivated and planted the fields and were preparing for the annual fishing harvest.

Much, but by no means all historical scholarship and literature, relates to the importance of this area, known in Anglo-American literature as the "Pioneer Valley," as a contested landscape - one which figured importantly in the early interaction of Native American tribes and Anglo-American traders and became the setting of highly significant events in colonial history. Of particular interest to current day historians and ethnohistorians is the century-long transition of the middle Connecticut River Valley from a region dominated by Native American culture (fishing, hunting, farming, ceremonial activities, and burials) to one organized in the form of small New England towns settled by yeoman farmers and enterprising tradesmen. The Anglo-American settlement of the area is represented by the Old Deerfield Historic District (NHL) and a number of National Register districts. This transition began with the events challenging the unity and power of the Pocumtuck Confederacy and presaging the hostilities of 1675-76 (called King Philip's War or Metacom's War). Conflicts continued intermittently between Anglo-American settlers and displaced Native Americans, who having migrated to New York, Vermont, and Canada, remained hopeful that they would be able to return to the middle Connecticut Valley. Hostilities between Indian tribes and colonists ended with the close of the French and Indian War in 1763. About this time Montague, which had been called "Hunting Hills," was settled as an extension of Sunderland ("Swampfield.")

5) Important events surrounded the interaction of Native American groups and Anglo-American traders and settlers in the period ca. 1600 to 1763. These relate to legal matters (e.g. deeds of land, alliances, etc.) as well as military conflicts. The recording of five deeds for a total of 8000 acres of land, much of it prime agricultural land, in the middle Connecticut Valley (within present-day Deerfield) in the late 1660s and early 1670s marked the beginnings of valley fur-trader John Pynchon's efforts to make Indian land a commodity that could be bought and sold (replacing the declining trade in beaver pelts); such transactions and the attempts to form settlements that followed stemmed from questionable motivations and engendered conflicting understandings about the meaning of land ownership, thereby becoming a source for rising tensions between native groups and colonists (Melvoin 1989, pp. 56-57; Thomas 1976). Anglo-American history chronicling the events indicates the presence of Metacom (a.k.a. King Philip), the chief sachem of the Wampanoag (formerly called the Pokanoket), in the region in the winter of 1675-76 (possibly at Northfield/Squaqheag) when tribal leaders are known to have gathered at a council site north of the river in Northfield. At least one interpretation explains his presence here as indicative of his strategy of laying claim to the region as the center of the unified Indian empire (Sheldon 1895, pp. 138-145). The Narragansett oral tradition and Sheldon's account (p. 145) confirm that the encampment at the falls in 1676 had been established by Canonchet, the Narragansett's chief sachem, as a refuge for the Native American families who had been displaced by conflicts with the Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth, and Connecticut colonies and their militias (Bruchau 2006; D. Harris, oral interview, August 10, 2008; *The Great Falls* 2008).

6) Many Native American families were present in the area and were camped on both sides of the falls on May 19, 1676 when Capt. William Turner and a militia made up mostly of men from the Hadley, Northhampton, and Springfield settlements launched the surprise attack known as the Falls Fight/Turners Falls Massacre (Judd 1908; Pressey 1910; Sheldon 1895). Based on the accounts provided by colonist Thomas Reed who escaped from captivity at Wissatinnewag-Peskeompscut/Turners Falls and alerted the Hadley settlement of a great gathering and festivity of Indian tribes, as well as the accounts of members of the militia who participated in the raid, Sheldon reported:

"Their principal camp [was] at the head of the rapids on the right bank of the river at Peskeompscut, another was at some distance above it, a third nearly opposite on the left bank, while a fourth was on Smead's Island, a short distance below, and still another at Cheapside guarded the ford of the Pocumtuck River. Besides these, every fishing place on the Connecticut as high up as the Ashuelot [River near Hinsdale] had its camp."(Sheldon 1895, p. 151)

7) Two important long-distance Indian trails converged on Montague Plain, one a south to north route that followed the Connecticut River between New Haven and Canada (ultimately leading to Montreal), another running east and west through Shutesbury (past Dry Hill) to the east and Greenfield to the west. [redacted]

A Native American Cultural Landscape

The interest of the Gay Head (Aquinnah) and Mashpee Wampanoag and Narragansett tribes in this area suggests that 1) the sacred meaning of this place extends to many tribes of the northeastern United States, and that 2) the well-documented fishing, hunting, and farming activities that defined the Native American lifeways in this region during the pre- and post-contact periods were accompanied by a strong spiritual attachment to the native landscape and a sacred ceremonial tradition based on astronomical observations.

The proximity of the ceremonial hill to the abundant fishing grounds at Wissatinnewag-Peskeompscut/Turners Falls is of major importance and suggests that ceremonial activities accompanied the gathering of many tribes at the falls during the spring shad and salmon runs. Sacred ritual surrounded the planting and harvesting of corn, which bore a sacred relationship to Cautantowwit (Bragdon 1996). Oral history also tells us that the familiar gathering place drew special tribal members and clans at other times for rituals associated with healing and other sacred practices. Great importance is attached to water in Native American cosmology, drawing attention to the importance of "Deep Hole," [redacted] (Bragdon 1996). Oral

tradition, as well as other evidence, demonstrates that this area was reserved for ceremonial events.

Of particular note is the Narragansett tribe's acknowledgement that the ceremonial hill is significant for its use in making astronomical observations that figure importantly in the tribe's sacred rituals (Scope of Work 2008; *The Great Falls* 2008). In an effort to understand the extent of such ceremonial use, observations by tribal members, tribal representatives, scientific analysts, and field researchers, were made in mid-August 2007 during the time of the Perseid meteorite shower. [redacted] on the evening when the Perseid meteriorite shower was most visible (D. Harris 2008; *The Great Falls* 2008). It appears such astronomical observations were related to celestial events, the daily and seasonal movement of the sun, and the relationship of the sun to natural features within what the documentation calls the "viewscape"(Scope of Work 2008). As early as 1643, colonial leader Roger Williams, in *Key into the Language of the Indians of New England*, referenced Native American interest in the constellations: "By occasion of their frequent lying in the fields and woods, they much observe the stars; and their very children can give names to many of them, and observe their motions...." (Reprinted www.nativestones.com/fell). The ceremonial practices that accompanied such observations involve, for the Narragansett, their connectedness to the spirit Cautantowwit (NR nomination, DOE 2007). Some of the details about these rituals cannot be disclosed. The hearth feature at the Hanneman Site (Paleo-Indian) and a hearth feature (with an associated small mammal burial) [redacted] (UMass Archeological Management Memorandum 2005, 2006) may also be associated with ceremonial practices that were carried out at some time during the area's long history of human use and occupation.

The ceremonial use of this area is indicated by the National Register documentation given to the National Park Service as part of the DOE of 2007 which notes that the absence of Native American lithic chipping debris and projectiles around the stone pile features supports the interpretation of the site as ceremonial, "in that they occupied a sacred space where the discard of refuse (such as lithic chipping debris and projectile points) would have been considered inappropriate." This pattern of use can be seen in the archeological record of sacred spaces at some traditional cultural sites across the country, where domestic sites were located on one side of a geographic feature such as a mountain, lake, river, or butte, and ceremonial sites that lacked artifacts were found on another side (see, for instance, Medicine Wheel/Medicine Mountain, NR and NHL draft documentation on file 2003).

Additionally, the high number of burials and burial sites in the Turners Falls area is one important element among others that is suggestive of a ceremonial and/or sacred relationship. Previous DOE documentation (the NR nomination that is part of the DOE of 2007) notes that the spirit Cautantowwit, which is related to the ceremonial hill site, holds dominion over creation and death. The discovery of inhumations during agricultural and development activities in the historic record in the vicinity of

Wissatinnewag-Peskeompscut/Turners Falls was not only noted by European American settlers, but recorded to such a degree that local historians in the nineteenth century wrote authoritatively about distinct modes of burials in the area. The modes identified included extended and flexed burial patterns, as well as one highly distinctive circular pattern comprised of twelve graves (Nassaney 1999, p. 223; Pressey 1910; Sheldon 1895). Native American cremations have also been found in the area.

The following entry from the catalogue for Memorial Hall museum at Deerfield conveys nineteenth century ideas about the significance of the circular or spokes burial found in the village of Gill at Wissatinnewag-Peskeompscut:

"Twelve bodies buried with their feet resting in a circle about five feet in diameter, the heads radiating out like the spokes of a wheel... The abundance of charcoal gave evidence of the presence of fire at the burial...It is a significant fact that among the bones and charcoal were fragments [of implements] broken by fire." (George Sheldon, *Catalog of the Collection of Relics in Memorial Hall*, 2nd ed., Deerfield, Mass. Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association 1908, reprinted books.google.com/books, July 28, 2008).

The spokes burial is an important element to modern tribes within the larger cultural landscape. Reported by both George Sheldon (1895, p. 78-79) and Edward Pressey (1910, p. 63), the circular burial was one of the most significant and enigmatic finds of the late nineteenth century. [redacted]. Pressey attached significance to the number twelve and commented that it "being the extremely ancient number connected with sun worship leads one to conjecture a mystical religious significance in the scheme"(Pressey 1910, p. 63).

Furthermore, artifact collecting during the historic era, and collection through modern archeological excavation, have recovered artifacts, both from burials, and in other contexts, that may be ceremonial in nature. These include stone weapons, smooth rattle stones, a carved stone pipe of a hooded figure (Nassaney 1999), Manitou stones (site observation/personal communication, Paul Loether 2008; *The Great Falls* 2008), and a soft pebble with scratch marks and drilled stone beads that are possibly talismanic at the Dedic/Sugarloaf Site (Earliest Americans Theme Study 2004).

[redacted] The viewscape from the top of the ceremonial hill reveals a number of natural features said to have sacred meaning in tribal cosmology. These features are believed to take on special meaning when they are viewed from the ceremonial hill in relationship to the stone features and astronomical or celestial events. The importance attached to such features is supported by early Anglo-American knowledge of Indian place names and recording of Indian legends.

The sacred meaning of several natural features which prominently appear in the viewscape across Montague Plain [redacted] was referenced in Edward Pressey's *History of Montague* (1910). These include Lake Pleasant and Grassy Lake, [redacted] which he noted for the "power of its fascinating beauty (251)"; Kunckwadchu/Mt. Toby, which with cataracts and caves was the legendary home of "Wittum" in Abenaki folklore; and the Wequamps/Sugar Loaf Mts., which was formed in the image of a beaver by "Hobmock," the spirit giant of Abenaki lore. According to Pressey (1910), what is known about sacred features such as Lake Pleasant, Mt. Toby, Mt. Sugarloaf, and the rivers and streams, appears to have come from the legends of the Abenaki (Algonquian-based language). Many of the place names attributed to Native American familiarity with this area of the Connecticut River can be found in recorded deeds; in many cases these names persisted in local usage and were recorded in the local histories written ca. 1900 by George Sheldon, Edward Pressey and Sylvester Judd. The film, *The Great Falls*, draws special attention to the importance of Wequamps in the origin stories of New England tribes and their relationship to the geological events that created glacial Lake Hitchcock (*The Great Falls* 2008).

Although a substantial amount of information is known by anthropologists about subsistence, food storage, fishing, and farming (corn, squash, beans, and tobacco), little is known by anthropologists about the spiritual beliefs and ceremonial practices of the Pocumtuck, their ancestors, intertribal relatives, and other regional tribes. Recorded observations and the collection/interpretation of physical artifacts at the end of the nineteenth century by Anglo-American historians and amateur archeologists corroborate the claims made by Native American tribes that the general area where the stone features are located was central to traditional ceremonial practices of several New England tribes. Such observations include the discovery of a circle on Montague Plain believed to have "ceremonial" purpose and the finding of several Manitou stones within this circle (Pressey 1910). The collections of Historic Deerfield and the Turners Falls library are repositories of some of the artifacts collected along the Connecticut River, on the Montague Plains, and surrounding hills (Sheldon 1908; Nassaney 1999).

3) STONE FEATURES AS A PROPERTY TYPE

For at least the past two decades some types of stone features in New England have increasingly been recognized by non-traditional groups, as well as historic preservation professionals, as a highly significant property type related to traditional cultural practices, including ceremonial, sacred, and medicinal practices (*The Great Falls* 2008: see especially the interviews with archeologists: Dr. James Petersen, University of Vermont and Dr. Paul Robinson, State Archaeologist, Rhode Island; Ballard 2000). However, it should be noted that not all historic preservation professionals agree that some stone features are traditional cultural places. Some professionals argue that most, if not all, stone features date to the historic period and are related to historic wall construction (Simon 2008; Massachusetts Department of Cultural Resources, "Stones that Speak: Forgotten Features of the Landscape," *Terra Firma* 5, 2007). In response to those who insist that the region's stone features can be attributed only to farm clearing or land

division by non-Indian settlers, Dr. Ella Sekatau, the tribal ethnohistorian and medicine woman for the Narragansett Tribe, has stated: "Those of us who know our oral traditions and originations know that's not correct....there is evidence, if they look. It is there." (interview: *The Great Falls 2008*).

There are many references to the sacred meaning of stone features and to Native American tribes in the northeastern United States in early Anglo-American literature to support the finding that such stone features can possess traditional and/or sacred significance. Such sources as the following support the association of tribes at first contact with these features and suggest their sacred importance, especially in regards to effigy-making and burial practices.

Ezra Stiles, a Congregationalist minister who served as President of Yale College, spent his early adult years as a missionary among the native tribes of New England, where he began to make detailed observations of the spiritual rituals of tribal members. He drew attention to the presence of effigy or god stones in the New England landscape (*The Great Falls* 2008). In his entry for September 19, 1794 (*The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles)*, Ezra Stiles noted observing on top of West Rock at New Haven: "a carved or wrought stone which I know to be one of the Indian Gods, of which I have found about or above twenty in different places from Boston to Hudson River, and particularly between New Milford on West and Medfield Massachusetts on East." (Reprinted www.nativestones.com/effigy).

In *Travels in New England and New York* (1821) Timothy Dwight, a later Yale president, commented on the Indian mode of erecting stone monuments under "extraordinary" circumstances (as compared with routine burials) to mark the consecrated ground where burials had taken place. He notes Monument Mountain in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, Sacrifice Rock on Cape Cod, and another site near New Milford, Connecticut. He also observes the recent desecration of several of these sites. "I ought, in my account of that, to have added, that this mode of erecting monuments was adopted on peculiar occasions [for example, the grave of an Indian sachem]. The common manner of Indian burial had nothing in it of this nature. The remains of the dead, who died at home, were lodged in a common cemetery, belonging to the village, in which they had lived. Sometimes they were laid horizontally, and sometimes they were interred in a sitting posture.... These monuments were plainly erected under the sanctions of Religion: for every Indian felt himself religiously obliged, when he passed by, to cast a stone upon them."(Timothy Dwight, *Travels in New England and New York*, 1821, Vol. 3, p. 408, reprinted www.nativestones.com/cairns)

Dwight also observed: "They also formed images of stone and paid them religious homage. One of these idols is now in the museum at Hartford. Sacred stones exist still in several places; one particularly, at Middletown, to which every Indian who passes by makes a religious obeisance." (1821, Vol. 1, p. 85, reprinted www.nativestones.com/effigy).

E.G. Squier, in *Antiquities of the State of New York* (1851) noted that such a stone effigy of white granite, measuring 31 inches high and 17 wide, had been found in East Hartford 1788 and was displayed at the Yale College museum. Squier observed: "The superstition of the Indians extended to remarkable objects in nature. A tree or stone of singular form seldom failed to command their reverence. A stone, which, from the action of natural causes, has assumed the general form of a man or an animal, is especially an object of regard, and the fancied resemblance is often heightened by artificial means, as by daubs of paint, indicating the eyes, mouth, and other features."(*Antiquities of the State of New York*, Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge, Vol. 11, 1851, p. 170-2, reprinted www.nativestones.com/effigy).

Noah Webster, in a letter of 1788 to Ezra Stiles, commented on Indian burials:

"The Indians seem to have two methods of burying the dead—one was, to deposit one body (or at most but a small number of bodies), in a place, and cover it with stones, thrown together in a careless manner. The pile this formed would naturally be nearly circular, but those piles that are discovered, are sometimes oval. In the neighborhood of my father's house, and about 7 miles from Hartford, on the public road to Farmington, there is one of these Carnedds [cairns] or heaps of stone. I often passed by it in the early part of my youth, but never measured its circumference or examined its contexts. My present opinion is that its circumference is about 25 feet. The inhabitants in the neighborhood report, as a tradition received from the natives, that an Indian was buried there, and that it is the custom for every Indian that passes by, to cast a stone upon the heap. This custom I have never seen practiced; but have no doubt of its existence, as it is confirmed by the general testimony of the first American settlers....The other mode of burying the dead was to deposit a vast number of bodies, or the bones which were taken from the single scattered graves, in a common cemetery, and over them raise vast tumuli or barrows; such as the mount at Muskingham, which is 390 feet in circumference, and 50 feet high. The best of these cemeteries may be found in Mr. Jefferson's *Notes on Virginia*, which will appear the most satisfactory to the reader in his own words."

Thomas Jefferson makes specific reference to stone piles or "barrows," in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1743-1846). He says, . . the Barrows, of which many are to be found all over this country. These are of different sizes, some of them constructed of earth, and some of loose stones. That they were repositories of the dead, has been obvious to all: but on what particular occasion constructed, was matter of doubt. Some have thought they covered the bones of those who have fallen in battles fought on the spot of interment. Some ascribed them to the custom, said to prevail among the Indians, of collecting, at certain periods, the bones of all their dead, wheresoever deposited at the time of death" (p. 223); and, "But on whatever occasion they may have been made, they are of considerable notoriety among the Indians: for a party passing, about thirty years ago, through the part of the country where this barrow is, went through the woods directly to it, without any instructions or enquiry, and having staid about it some time, with expressions which were construed to be those of sorrow, they returned to the high road, which they had left about half a dozen miles to pay this visit, and pursued their journey. There is another barrow, much resembling this in the low grounds of the South

branch of Shenandoah, where it is crossed by the road leading from the Rock-fish gap to Staunton. Both of these have, within these dozen years, been cleared of their trees and put under cultivation, are much reduced in their height, and spread in width, by the plough, and will probably disappear in time. There is another on a hill in the Blue ridge of mountains, a few miles North of Wood's gap, which is made up of small stones thrown together. This has been opened and found to contain human bones, as the others do. There are also many others in other parts of the country" (pp. 225, 226).

Noah Webster also noted evidence that the burning of bones was also practiced in Indian burials and he noted the presence of ising glass (a sample of which Stiles had previously shown Webster), formed of pure clay, and or shells and cement hardened by fire, without glazing, which was often found in the meadows of the Connecticut River Valley. These observations are presented in the context of the then-current intellectual dispute about the relationship of North American Indian practices and pre-Columbian European influences. In the third of his letters to Stiles, Webster refuted his earlier opinion that the Muskingham mounds on the Ohio River between West Virginia and Ohio were created by DeSoto. (G. Hubert Smith, "Noah Webster, The Archaeologist," *American Anthropologist* 33, no.4, (Oct.-Dec, 1931), pp. 620-624, reprinted www.jstor.org/stable/661015?seq=1. Also reprinted www.nativestones.com/cairns).

Recently, archeologists, historic preservation professionals, and others have begun to work with tribes to document and record the traditional and/or ceremonial meanings and the importance of such places. For instance, Edwin C. Ballard has been investigating the uses of specific "U" shaped structures since the late 1980s and hypothesizes that these features are viewing platforms. Such structures would have been used to view astronomical events (Ballard 2000; see also *The Great Falls* 2008).

Through this research, tribes and others have identified several types of stone features including, but not limited to: cairns, rock piles, stone rows, and stone row complexes, linking rows, fish weirs, enclosures, stone chambers, standing stones, pedestals, niches, portals, and effigy stones (*The Great Falls* 2008, see also www.stonestructures.org, Reference Materials). Each of these types of stone features may have been used for multiple purposes temporally and by different tribes. Some of the uses of these features include, but are not limited to: burial markers, for subsistence related activities, as prayers and/or for ceremonial purposes, as celestial markers, and as viewing platforms (D. Harris 2008; www.stonestructures.org, *The Great Falls* 2008, NR nomination, DOE 2007; Scope of Work 2008). These features are often related to other stone features and other types of markers and sites across a larger cultural landscape (Scope of Work 2008).

4) TURNERS FALLS SACRED CEREMONIAL HILL

The tribes maintain that this property is an example of a prayer hill that includes rock piles and stone row features that are believed to have been used for ceremonial purposes and as viewing stations for celestrial events. Rock piles and stone rows often include godstones and/or Manitou stones, several of which are recorded at this site (Loether 2007). They can be large or small. They are often used as ceremonial directional

markers and components of ceremonial calendars (D. Harris 2008; *The Great Falls* 2008; Scope of Work 2008).

However, while the FAA, initially disagreed and the Massachusetts SHPO continues to disagree with the tribes's assertion that this property is a traditional cultural place used as a prayer hill, it should be noted that the use of the stone row and existing piles in conjunction with the annual Perseid meteorite shower (mid-August) is credible and consistent with the practices of the tribes in the northeastern United States and eastern Canada, some of whom referred to their home land as "Dawnland" or the land of the first light. The use of wheels in ceremonial rituals and healing practices is common to a number of North American tribes and has been associated with native cosmologies in which astronomical observations figure prominently (see, for example, the Medicine Wheel/Medicine Mountain NHL and NR draft documentation on file 2003). Manitou stones are a common marker of Native American practices (Mavor and Dix 1989; *The Great Falls* 2008; D. Harris 2008).

Tribal oral tradition provides further evidence of the connection between sacred ceremonies and places such as the prayer hill and their continuing importance to tribal identity. John B. Brown III, a hereditary medicine man-in-training and THPO of the Narragansett Indian Tribe, has stated, "Remember, these ceremonies were our science. We had a way of delving into the places of other existences, other realities without necessarily intruding upon them. It was more of an attempt to understand our place in the universe and our place in existence. . . .The ceremonies that were performed there would have been performed simultaneously in other places. That area was one simple locus of many loci in which simultaneous ceremonies would have been held." (interview: *The Great Falls* 2008).

Corroborating the Native American claims that the area is associated with traditional ceremonial practices, Edward Pressey in *History of Montague: A Typical Puritan Town* (1910), reported the finding of two sacred ("Manitou") stones at a site on Montague Plain within several hundred feet of the ceremonial hill:

"William Marsh has shown me two Indian sacred symbol stones, figuring seemingly the spread wings of the "thunder bird," the war god, one very rare with eye pierced for standard, the other slightly carved to suggest feathers, both beautiful. These relics were found at different times within the same circle of ground which seems to have been made softer and clearer of stones than the surrounding gravel, . . . in the middle of Montague Plain, at the point where Kunckwadchu [Mt. Toby], the sacred mountain most impressively punctuates a wide horizon of hills when the August sun or the February moon is highest in the heavens. We guess that this was an important ceremonial place" (Pressey 1910).

The stone features are noted by tribes to be the central component of a ceremonial landscape that can be defined by a "viewscape" and relates to locations where other stone features have been confirmed. An ongoing survey has to date located a number of stone features (believed to have sacred meaning) [redacted]

[redacted] This roughly circular area corresponds to a possible multiple property study area having as its thematic focus traditional land uses and ceremonial practices associated with the region's Native American cultural groups. Within this context, the ceremonial hill with its component stone features at Turners Falls Airport has been determined individually eligible under Criteria A and D.

In addition, the ceremonial hill with its component stone features is considered a contributing property within an expanded National Register eligible historic/archeological district [redacted] Although the final boundaries of such a Turners Falls Cultural Landscape District are presently undetermined, [redacted]

5) SOURCES

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