

# **Manitou or Spirit Stones, Their Meanings and Link to the Native American Cultural Landscape in North America**

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## **Abstract**

Since ancient times the Native or Indian people of North America have believed in the existence of a supernatural, omnipresent and omniscient ‘force’ or ‘presence’. All encompassing and pervasive, it is universal in scale. For many of the Native people living here, manifestations of the supernatural could be expressed by one word: *Manitou*. Manitou itself was seen to rest in rocks and boulders, sometimes referred to as ‘spirit’ or ‘image’ stones. They were once a common feature of the landscape. Hilltops and other significant places considered important were favored locations for the manifestation of Manitou. On the cultural landscape, the stones together with their physical setting were considered sacred.

Physically, both the hills and Manitou stones were, and are, generally associated with water, e.g. springs, rapids and water falls, creeks, straits, river bends and drainage divides. Association with springs, however, seems to have been most common. There is also a definite trail or prehistoric footpath association, and the places venerated by the presence of Manitou(s) may have functioned as part of a broad ‘trail-shrine’ network, identifying ‘place’ in both a spiritual and geographic context (Bender 2007&2008a&b).

Some Manitou stones and effigies can be dated back many millennia. Historically, early French explorers, Jesuit priests and the later missionaries frequently mentioned them as did Henry Rowe Schoolcraft during his travels in the upper Midwest in the early 19th century. Once the target of destruction by missionaries, a surprisingly high number have survived, discovered where originally erected. Recently discovered lithic Bison effigies and other distinctive shapes including rock outcrop resembling human and animal profile styles can be considered as part of the phenomena.

This paper, the product of 25 years of continuing research, features an additional number of Manitou stones, cairns, profile rocks and other occurrences found spread across the North American cultural landscape. Together with their meanings according to Native American traditions and cosmologies, emphasis will be given to those discovered in the past few years since a previous report was written (Bender 2011a). Also included is an emphasis on the specific footpaths or trails, many now modern roadways, which linked Manitou as a means through which the ideal, traditions and ideas were transmitted.

## Introduction

It was sometime between 1989 and 1990 that I was more fully introduced to the subject of sacred rocks and boulders which, long before the coming of the Europeans, had enhanced the North American landscape (Freeman et al 1990, Mavor and Dix 1989). Because of previous experience (Bender 2009) it was not a total revelation or epiphany, but did become a catalyst for delving more deeply into the phenomena of individual rocks versus petroform (Bender 2007). It is true that the 1989 publication, *Manitou: The Sacred Landscape of New England's Native Civilization* (Mavor and Dix), had shown some of the individual rocks, boulders and landscape features found in New England likely encompassed the Native American (henceforth referred to as American Indian or Indian) ideal of *Manitou*. However, acceptance of some of the premises that Mavor and Dix expressed was slow to emerge within the academic community. Furthermore and critically so, the fuller picture on a larger geographic scale was lacking detail, much of what was described considered speculation and on the fringe of archeological academia if not totally outside it.

Since those early days, a continuing interest and the quest for the myriad forms of *Manitou* became a decades long journey; one archival, the other systematically roaming the physical landscape. During the span of years, I had written two articles which described the ideal, concepts and manifestation of *Manitou* in broader detail (Bender 2003, Bender 2011a). The concepts that I described were or are nothing new in North America. Ancient by all accounts, the very first European explorers who landed on the eastern shores of the North American continent recorded the word *manitou*, its meaning, traditions and abodes in a land they knew little about nor understood (Parkman 1983, Philbrick 2006).

Despite this early contact and careful explanations of *Manitou* by the native inhabitants, most non-Indians remained apathetic at best, ignorant at the worst, or a combination of the two. Carrying their Christianity like a sword, they considered it superior and the true religion even though the saints the Catholics prayed to, in essence, were no different than *Manitou*, i.e. a vehicle to God or the Creator, not the chief object of worship. The overall bias was not kind to American Indian beliefs, the culture or landscape. *Kitchi Manitou*, the Great Spirit (Leeming & Page 1998:70-71), had met a force that its chief tenants, the Great Mystery and respect for nature would barely endure or survive. Under the same sun that shone on places inhabited by the spirit of *Manitou*, destruction of conquered cultures shrines is nothing new, a testament to religious intolerance as ancient as the edicts in the Old Testament of the Bible, the Romans or those issued by the Popes in the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. (Bender 2003).

Bearing this in mind, it is fortunate that the memory and knowledge of many of the sacred boulders, profile and effigy rocks, and individual *Manitou* stones survived. At one time they were spread across the breadth of the North American landscape. Many of them, now long gone, are known only from the written record. Still others have been found, *in situ*, having survived the wrath of religious dogma, desecration, defacement or outright destruction. Yet, all can tell us something if we choose to open our minds and senses to an ancient past that embraced the numinous devoid of religious intolerance or bias and, instead, become one with the land at a special place or time where the veil has thinned between this reality and another.

## Brief History and Review

Rather than to rewrite what has already been published, thus making redundant the results of a decades long effort to catalog known Manitou stones, sacred boulders, rocks and land marks, portions of this article will borrow select parts from two comprehensive articles previously published on the concept or ideal of Manitou. The first article, **Manitou Stones in Wisconsin**, was published in *The 3<sup>rd</sup> Stone* (Bender 2003). The second, **The Spirit of Manitou Across North America**, Chapter Six in *Archaeology Experiences Spirituality?* (Bender 2011a), is a far more comprehensive piece which identifies and explores the various individual forms of Manitou spread across the breadth of the North American continent.

Because the word *Manitou* is derived from the Algonquin language core, one of the most widespread language groups in North America, it should come as no surprise that both the word and traditions related to a spiritual presence are encountered wherever the Algonquin-speaking people were found living. Having lived in the State of Wisconsin for almost my entire life, it was at the local level that I first encountered Manitou stones and inherent place names derived from the Algonquin word (Bender 2003:26). However, Wisconsin is not a unique place regarding the reverence for and location of Manitou stones or as a derivative for place names in the United States or North America proper. Like the water, rocks and provocative physical settings often associated with Manitou, it was present wherever Native people lived and traveled over thousands of years. The distribution of the macro-tradition is most prominent within the Algonquin language core area, i.e. the northern mid-latitudes and central interior of North America. Early contact with other language groups they came in contact with likely helped to spread the tradition. Accordingly, there is an ancient, documented tradition of ‘sacred’ boulders amongst the Sioux or Lakota who, migrated north from the Ohio River valley, eventually settling in the upper Midwest and western Great Lakes area. Many places or locations were identified by the Lakota solely by their association to a particular rock or boulder (Pond 1986:87, 89; Riggs 1883:149). To the Sioux, these rocks were imbued with *wakan*. *Wakan* is simply translated as “sacred”, but like the word *Manitou*, it does have a more complex definition outside the linguistic parameters of a one word meaning.

Through the eyes of the indigenous people of North America, the physical landscape was an inseparable part of a spirit-filled landscape. It has been described as an “integrated cultural landscape” or *cultural landscape* (Bender 1996, 2008), a homogenous blend of the real or natural world lived on and in for generations with the realm of spirits. “They only talk of Manito, always Manito” remarked Joseph Nicolet while traveling with the Ojibway of Minnesota in the 1830’s (Fertey 1970: 264). Roger Williams wrote, “at the apprehension of any excellency in men, women, birds, fish, etc., to cry out *manitoo*, that is, ‘It is God’ ...” The reaction to ships, buildings and especially books and letters was similar and evoked the word *Mannitowock*, i.e. ‘They are Gods’ (Philbrick 2006: 190). During his 30,000 miles of journeys amongst the Indians on the eastern continent, the Moravian missionary John Heckewelder recorded some extended remarks in April, 1773 about the reverence for Manitou (Wallace 1998:112). Heckewelder said, “The Indian considers himself as being created by an all-powerful, wise and benevolent Manitou, all that he possesses, all that he enjoys, he looks upon as given to him or allotted for his use by the Great Spirit who gives him life; he therefore believes it to be his duty to adore and

worship in Creator and benefactor; to acknowledge with gratitude his past favours, thank him for present blessings, and solicit the continuation of his good will.” This adoration was many times performed by seeking those places where Manitou was thought to exist or inhabit, places not separated from nature in a man-made setting like a church, but cocooned in the natural world with man as an integral part of a fully animate and phenomenological world.

On the cultural landscape, Manitou was omnipresent; recognized everywhere and in anything endowed with supernatural power (Parkman 1983:393). In the seventeenth century, the Jesuit priest Father Claude Allouez said that the Ottawa, an Algonquin-speaking tribe “... recognize no sovereign master of heaven and earth, but believe there are many spirits ... they call it Manitou and pay it ... worship and veneration ...” (Thwaites 1896:50,285-287). The Sun, moon, sky, stars, Aurora borealis, wind, rain, thunder, lightning, hail, rocks, lakes, rivers, streams, waterfalls, caverns, mountains, forest, plants, trees, animals, birds, fish, night and day or light and darkness, life itself and even human breath all possessed or were identified as living Manitou (Bender 2003:26; Bowden 1981:74, 80, 109; Heming 1896:137; Parkman 1983:281, 385-387; Schlesier 1987:4-15, Spence 1994:87, Terrell 1964:108,119,204,210).

Rocks were probably recognized on as embodiments of Manitou more than just about any other physical object. As T. E. Mails (1985:31) has said, “even rock[s] played their medicine role by transferring unique abilities ... or [they] might speak to man by word or action to transmit a message from above”. In the early French, Dutch and English accounts, boulders were the most often described ‘medium’ where Manitou was said to reside and, according to the Natives, were found full of living blood and flesh when broken (Parkman 1983:386). In some cases, it was said that the spirit of an ancient chief or some other person resided in the rocks (Spence 1994:87), those rocks being associated with a special place, e.g. the mouth of a river (Oliver 1903:24-25). The Chippewa (Ojibwa) cultural hero Nanabush was said to have marked his brother’s grave with a single, unmodified stone, stones having the ability to be alive and sentient or full of spirit (Barnouw 1977).

The most likely boulders and rocks thought to be living embodiments of Manitou were those particular rocks which exhibited attributes either calling attention to themselves or to a unique setting. Thinking it God’s work, the Jesuits took particular delight in casting many into the rivers or falls whenever they encountered them (Bender 2003:26-27, Bender 2011a:158). Fortunately, many of these same boulders were documented and pictured in later 19th century town and county histories. Commonly known as “Manitou stones”, a number of those were large glacial erratics. Others were curiously shaped and highly weathered bedrock outcrops or outliers. If designated as Manitou, all were looked upon and said to be sacred (Bender 2003:26-31). Many times the venerated rocks were located upon a mountain or pinnacle, the high place and physical setting amplifying the assurance that prayers were heard and acceptable to the Great Spirit (Figure 1).



Figure 1. A lithograph titled “*Hieroglyphics*” picturing the weathered and curiously shaped rock or tor (top left) engraved by E. Weber & Company, Baltimore, and published by W. H. Emory, Notes of a military reconnoissance, from Fort Leavenworth, in Missouri, to San Diego, in California..., Exec. Doc. Number 7, 30th Cong. (Senate), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, Washington, 1848. Note the stick figures with outstretched arms and hands climbing up toward the tor, a manifestation of Manitou. *Herman Bender collection*.

A frequent manifestation of Manitou, often times encountered but seldom, if ever, described in detail, were the stone pilings or cairns found scattered across many parts of the continent. Ethnographically, there are traditions connected to some beyond mere mortuary practices although many were likely grave sites (Hubbard 1887). Still others were found in cleared fields and are most certainly remnants from agricultural practices, i.e. ‘stone picking’ and piling (Dunham et al 1998). However, votive use and a definitive landscape association or connection to ‘place’ along an ancient, well-worn trail and other salient features such as prominence and a view shed indicate more than a mundane stone piling exercise.

## **Sacred Boulders, Rock Outcrops, Cairns and Trails**

### *Eastern River Portages and Trail Associations*

Since publication of the last article examining the manifestation of Manitou in North America (Bender 2011a), on-going research has identified an additional number of sacred boulders and further landscape associations. Like those described in the two previous publications, they also display phenomenal attributes and a sense of place, generally the ‘unique setting’ calling attention to either a salient feature or the surrounding landscape. The profound sense of place in a unique setting is many times associated with water. On the cultural landscape lakes, rivers, eddies, water falls and rapids were all propitiated

(Bender 2011a:149-150). In addition to the water bodies, well known or frequented portages and river or stream fords were sometimes marked by a Manitou stone, many clearly defined by votive offerings, oral traditions or a name identifying its unique identity.

One renowned portage marked with a stone existed in northeastern Manitoba, Canada until destroyed by Europeans. Of interest, the name Manitoba itself is a derivative from the Cree *manitou-wapow* or Ojibwa *manidoobaa*. Both mean "straits of Manitou, the Great Spirit", a place referring to what is now called The Narrows in the center of Lake Manitoba. Before its destruction the portage, on the height or ridge of land southeast of Hudson Bay which separates the Hayes River from the Nelson and Echimamish Rivers, was marked with a (Manitou) stone known as the *Painted Stone*. While traveling in the Cree Indian controlled area in 1786, one David Thompson commented that *Painted Stone* was "... a manito stone in shape like a cobbler's lapstone, but three times the size, painted red with ochre, to which they make ... offerings." The stone and offerings around it were reportedly desecrated and kicked into the river by one of Thompson's 'tolerant' people traveling with him, i.e. a non-Indian. Thirty three year later it was noted that the stone had been removed years earlier and the spot ceased to be venerated. (Wilson 1951:81).

Another portage marked with a Manitou stone is between Poplar Narrows and Pikangikum, Berens River. Berens River is located along the eastern shore of Lake Winnipeg in Manitoba where it enters the lake after flowing west from the province of Ontario. Known as "our grandfather rock", this large boulder is smoothly rounded and similar to ones used in Wabeno pavilions (Figure 2). Regarded as sacred, it has become a shrine where passers-by still leave tobacco offerings and other objects (Hallowell 1992:58).



Figure 2. Chief William Berens with "our grandfather's rock" and offerings on the portage between Poplar Narrows and Pikangikum, Berens River. Regarded as sacred, it became a shrine where passers-by left offerings. I. A. Hallowell photo, ca. 1932.

Farther south in Wisconsin, at least one important portage on the Wisconsin River is marked by a Manitou stone (Bender 2003:27). A Manitou rock can still be found near Grand Father Bull Falls along the west side of the Wisconsin River in Lincoln County, the site of an old portage route as reported by Hiram Calkins in 1855 (Brown 1908:167). This particular rock outcrop has 'projection' in addition to 'sound' emitted from water flowing underground through a split or fracture in the rock (Figures 3a&3b). The projection, split and sound are 'phenomenal attributes' (Steinbring 1992), considered highly 'mysterious' and would be purpose enough for Grand Father (Bull) Falls to have been venerated as a place of Manitou.



Figure 3a. Manitou rock located along the portage or trail near Grand Father Bull Falls on the Wisconsin River showing the 'projection' which resembles a bird's beak and head when viewed from this angle.



Figure 3b. View of the Manitou rock or stone showing the split or Fracture (above the dog's tail and back) where water can be heard flowing underground, a phenomenal attribute associated with Manitou from which Manitowoc, Wisconsin derived its name.

Linked by the extensive prehistoric (Indian) trail network east of the Mississippi River, a portage and trail in south western Pennsylvania connected the Susquehanna River flowing into the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean with the Ohio River and Mississippi River drainage basins (Hulbert 1902, Wallace 1987:51,77,156). From an account written by William Rudolph Smith (n.d.) whose grandfather founded Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, the site of the village of Huntingdon was once occupied by a band of Indians who were almost certainly Oneida, i.e., the nation of “the upright stone” (Bender 2003:29). Their Indian camp or village was widely known in the western Pennsylvania area as “Stone Town” or rather “Standing Stone Town.” J. Simpson Africa’s *History of Huntingdon and Blair Counties* (1883:452) adds this information about the stone: “The early history of [Huntingdon] borough carries us back to the traditions of the Indian occupation and the reminiscences of the early Indian traders.... They erected near the river ... a tall, slim pillar of stone, covered with hieroglyphics, presumed to embody the history as well as a record of the achievements of the tribe...” It is supposed that this stone was carried off by the Indians when they emigrated elsewhere, an Oneida tradition (Ball and Waggoner 2010:42, Bender 2003:29), as they would have regarded it with great sanctity.

*Standing Stone*, sometimes called *Standing Rock* at Kent in Portage County, Ohio is yet another venerated ‘standing stone’ associated with a river. It was encountered along the Mahoning Path or trail, a short cut in the ‘Great Path’ to Detroit and western Great Lakes. Because it was the shortest route, this path was especially popular with couriers

traveling on foot between Detroit and the Pennsylvania frontier at the time. The path ran from Beaver's Town in western Pennsylvania to Youngstown in Ohio "crossing the Cuyahoga River at *Standing Stone* ..." and from the ford, continuing on to Akron (Wallace 1987:96-97). Standing Stone was described by John Heckewelder (Wallace 1998:253-254) in 1789 as "... a high rock in the middle of the stream ... The base like a pillar, broad at the bottom, then a ledge, then it gets quite thin as though it had been planed off; it widens again at the top, & has 3 small white pines standing on it." (Figure 4). Heckewelder, once across the stream, noticed a "peeled tree" with Native exploits inscribed on it using charcoal and redstone (a form of ochre).



Figure 4. The Standing Stone in the Cuyahoga River near Kent, Portage County, Ohio.

Traveling a short distance up the Mahoning River connected by the Salt Lick Trail, a spur of the Mahoning Trail, Heckewelder and company camped by a huge salt spring or "Lick" at present day Niles where twelve separate deer and animal trails converged (Wallace 1998:254). A phenomenal attribute of the landscape, it is the place where the name *Mahoning* was derived, meaning "at the deer lick" (Wallace 1987:96). Both the rock and 'deer lick' would have been looked upon by the Indians as manifestations of Manitou which embodied a particular phenomenal or animate belief.

Not to be confused with the standing stone at Kent is another rock outcrop in Ohio named the *Standing Stone*. It is well worth examining, especially in the context of Native beliefs and cultural landscape associations. According to the Reverend David Jones (1774:64) who visited what is now Lancaster, Fairfield County in central Ohio in February 1773, there was a Delaware (Lenape) village "... at the *Standing Stone* ... situated on a creek called Hock-hok-in." To the Delaware, it was "Ach-sin-sink" or the "Standing Stone" (Figure 5). Ach-sin-sink outcrops along the Belpre Trail which intersected with the Sciota River and Trail. It exhibits prominence and presence, both phenomenal attributes (Steinbring 1992). The Sciota Trail ran north to the Sandusky Trail, completing the communication and phenomenal landscape association network of places associated with Manitou and sacred places (Bender 2003, 2007 & 2011a).

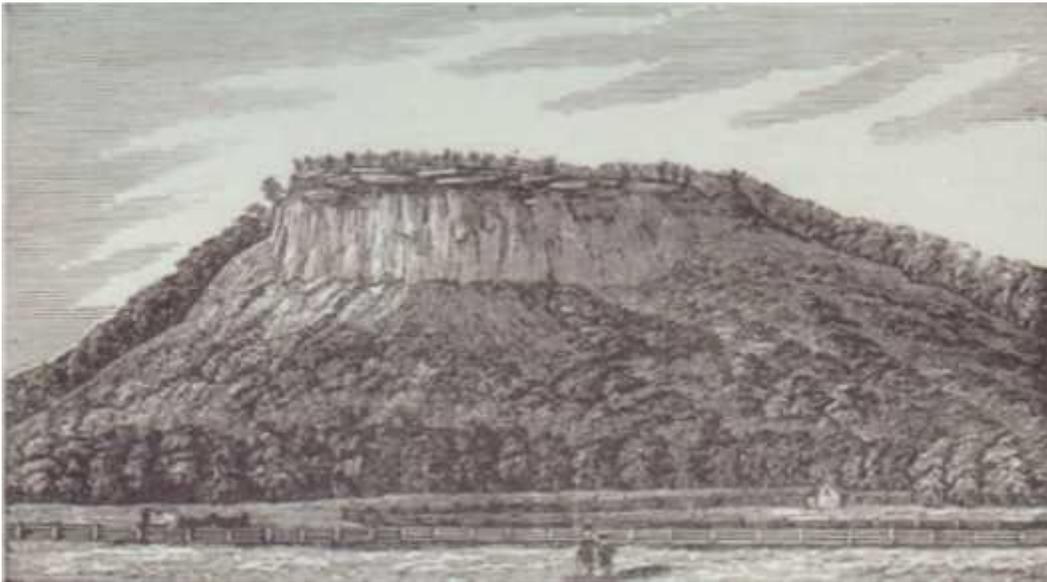


Figure 5. 'Standing Stone' of the Delaware, Fairfield County, Ohio from an 1846 illustration by Henry Howe and named *Mount Pleasant* at that time.

Continuing north on the Mahoning Trail to Cleveland, northwest on the Great Path or from the south on the Sandusky Trail to Fort Sandusky, all three trails intersected the Lake Shore path which skirted the south shore of Lake Erie (Wallace 1987:85-87). Fort Sandusky was strategically located near Indian towns and trading posts on the Great Indian Trail between Detroit and Pittsburgh. Traveling further west from the fort on the Great Path toward present day Toledo, the trail split. The north branch went to Detroit past the Straits connecting Lakes Huron and Erie, the site of another Manitou stone deliberately destroyed by the Jesuits (Bender 2003:28, Parkman 1983:739). The southwestern branch, the Maumee Trail, crossed the Maumee River below the rapids near Roche de Bouef or the 'Buffalo Rock' in the middle of the Maumee River (Figure 5 river slide). Now the site of present day Waterville, Ohio, the name "*Roche de Boeuf*" was probably a British misspelling and mistranslation of the French "*Roche de Bout*" meaning "rock on end", but commonly accepted to mean "buffalo rock", perhaps because the shape somewhat resembles a buffalo or bison (Figure 6a).



Figure 6a. A mid-19<sup>th</sup> century view of Roche de Boeuf or ‘Buffalo Rock’ at Waterville, Ohio.

A phenomenal landscape feature thought to be inhabited by Manitou, the Jesuit priest Father Claude Allouez noted that “At perilous places in the rivers, they propitiate the eddies and rapids by offering them presents (Thwaites [ed.] 1896:50, 285-287). The once-massive limestone rock outcropping standing in the Maumee River has marked many events in the history of the valley. It was a legendary site for Native Americans and the place where they gathered before the Battle of Fallen Timbers in August 1794. Furthermore, its importance as a landmark and spiritual qualities were noted in an 1807 treaty where the ceded land by the Ottawa, Chippewa, Wyandot and Potawatomi included a reserve “... above *Roche de Bouef*, to include the village where Tondaganie, (or the Dog) now lives” (Royce: 1900:674). About one-third of the rock was destroyed when a railroad bridge was built which caused a great controversy (Fig. 6b).



Figure 6b. Roche de Bouef in the Maumee River with the railroad bridge which, when built, destroyed one-third of the sacred rock.

## *Cairns & Rock Pilings*

Perhaps of little worth or note to some, we are fortunate that there are abundant references and mentions of rock piles or cairns throughout the North America continent, many of the descriptions dating from the early historic period. The French, who had penetrated into the interior of North America long before the English, noted in 1749 that a ‘cairnlike Seneca rock structure’ located at the mouth of a stream (the Apple River) entering Lake Erie (near present day Barcelona, Pennsylvania) marked a portage route connecting the eastern Great Lakes with Lake Chautauqua and the Ohio River drainage system (Eckert 1995:xxxvi, Wallace 1987:136-137). Without knowing it, they had stumbled on to an ancient form of semiotics, one that could possess a dual identity. By 1749 it had been known for well over a century that trail routes were marked with ‘heaped stones’. As Barber (1844:97) said about the Indians and their trails in the northeastern states, “When a company traveled together, they generally followed each other ... scarcely ever two were seen by side of another ... To know their walks again, in unfrequented woods, they *heaped stones* (cairns) and marked trees.” It was also known that many of the markers and, therefore, the trails themselves were of ancient origin, beginning as migratory paths for large animals, usually bison (Bender 2002). West of the Mississippi River, especially in the generally featureless Central Great Plains, trails were marked in much the same manner with special emphasis on the ridges and especially the divides separating river drainage systems or springs (Blakeslee and Blasing 1988). These were meant to be purely utilitarian ‘sign posts’ for the traveler needing guidance in finding trail spurs.

For the purposes of this article, only those cairns of a mainly non-utilitarian nature that exhibit shared traits such as being built on a prominence and/or having a definite trail or portage association will be examined. Cairn placement along a trail could also convey additional information about the surrounding landscape, e.g the location of a venerated spring (Figure 7). It is these attributes which may indicate the presence of Manitou,



Figure 7. The Senn Cairn in Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin was constructed as a turtle petroform and aligned to point toward a sacred spring along the trail which connected the continental sub-divide (see Figure 19a).

elevating the cairn or locale to more than the mundane. At these places, Manitou may impose as the *genius loci*, a trail shrine or ‘center’ (Hall 1985:184-185, McLuhan 1971:20).

With the establishment of a trail shrine system that marked through routes or consecrating a spring or an important ‘place’ (Bender 2007, 2008a), some cairns grew to immense size with the addition of ‘donations’ from passers-by who, seeking safe journey from the spirit of place, left a rock as a votive offering (Dunham et al 1998, Rutenber 1992:373-374). Moreover, a cairn’s structure and physical location along a trail is not so different than in a word dating from antiquity and sometimes used for Old World stone piles marking trails, i.e. *hermes*. Like the cairns, the *hermes*, named after the Greek god of commerce and travel the messenger Hermes, marked travel routes and were built up over time by passers-by who placed stones on them (Murray 2004:110). The parallels between the Old and New World are striking and have sometimes led to misconceptions of authorship, especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Standard English dictionaries state that the definition of the word *cairn*, meaning a “a man-made pile, heap or stack of stones,” comes to us from the Scottish Gaelic word *cairn*. Henry Schoolcraft (1851:480) said that the Indian-made stone piles he saw on Mackinac Island were reminiscent of *Celtic Cairns*. Unlike some of his contemporaries, Schoolcraft firmly attributed their construction and other stone work to the indigenous people. Four score years later, Wilbert Hinsdale (1931:111) noted that, “At certain places the Indians had made stone piles, built up one stone at a time by passers-by.” He also observed that the stone piles commemorated the location of an important event or that they marked a former spiritual presence or physical manifestation, perhaps a spirit tree (Dunham et al 1998). One cairn on the shore of Thunder Bay on Lake Huron described by Thomas McKenney (1959:402) was or is “... an oval figure, about twenty feet by ten, in the longest, and broadest parts. In the center of it are about twenty stones, four of which are larger the rest; and each of these, I should judge, would measure three feet every way. The path leading to this sacred place is well trod by those who come to make their offerings to this pile of stones, which is Manitou! Upon the four principal stones were offerings to of these benighted people, in tobacco, bits of iron, pieces of old kettles, pipes and various other things. The four large stones the Indians said had been there always, and the little ones had been gathered around them since.”

In Hinsdale’s description, a number of important features associated with the Manitou and cairn are evident; the surrounding landscape with Lake Huron is a prominent focal point, a connection with the trail or foot path, and the round cairn being built up over time by ‘donation stones’ strewn around the four large stones. Of further importance and interest, it should be noted that within the Woodland and Plains Indian cosmology and beliefs, the number four is held as a sacred number (Bender 2003:14,16&17; Bender 2011a:165). The number four can sometimes be discovered when encoded in cairns and other petroform oriented to the cardinal or cross-cardinal directions (Bender 2008b:201&205). However, they do not necessarily have to have a trail association.

The ‘donation’ cairns of interest for the purpose of this article were exclusively located along well established trails or paths, usually at or near a stream or other water feature (Rutenber 1992:374). As mentioned, many if not most of the paths and, by extension, the cairns, were of ancient origin (Bender 2003, 2007, 2008a; Freeman et al 1990; Wallace 1987). Furthermore, geographic cairn placement could also convey

additional information about the surrounding landscape, e.g. the location of a spring, a portage or perhaps a rock art panel (Figure 1). With the establishment of what also functioned as trail shrines along through routes such as a mountain pass or valley, consecrating a spring, or as suggested by some, a marker or petroform of spiritual importance (Bender 2007&2008a, Schassfma 1980:98), the cairns grew in size with donations from generations of passers-by traveling on foot (Ruttenber 1992:373).

What was not mentioned by Hinsdale was the oft heard story of a chief or warrior buried beneath virtually every stone pile. The seemingly ubiquitous legend of the cairns being burial structures for a fallen chief or warrior is common in the eastern part of North America and in the west. In New England and upstate New York, descriptions of 'donation' cairns, originating (in legend) as burial monuments, were documented by travelers early on. In a letter written by Dr. Noah Webster (20 January 1788) to Rev. Ezra Stiles, the President of Yale College, Webster noted that, "In the neighborhood of my fathers house, and about 7 miles from Hartford, on the public road to Farmington, there is one of these Carnedds [cairns] or heaps of stone. 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 practised; but have no doubt of its existence ..."

In 1821 while traveling a well used and ancient trail in Massachusetts (the route of modern day U.S. Hwy. 7), the Reverend Timothy Dwight (Vol.2:380), President of Yale College said, "From [Great] Barrington, in our way to Stockbridge, we crossed Monument mountain: a spur from the Green Mountain range. The name is derived from a pile of stones, about six or eight feet in diameter, circular at its base, and raised in the form of an obtuse cone over the grave of one of the aborigines. The manner, in which it has been formed, is the following- Every Indian, who passes by the place, throws a stone upon the [cairn] . . . it seems to be an expression of peculiar reverence, and an act of obedience to the dictates of their religion."

Traveling farther north toward the intersection with an ancient path at Stockbridge, Dwight (Vol.3:403) further described another cairn in the same vicinity, "After we had examined the falls of this river, and its passage through the mountains below, my companions ascended the summit of that on the Eastern side, for the purpose of seeing a monument of stones ... This is a circular enclosure, surrounding the grave. Both (this and the 'obtuse cone' shaped cairn) were, however, gathered in the same manner. Every Indian, at least of the tribe to which the deceased belonged, considered himself as under a sacred obligation, whenever he passed by, to add one stone to the heap ... It is remarkable, that both are on high, and solitary, grounds, remote from every Indian settlement ... places considered ... as consecrated ground." A sacred location on "high ... grounds", important traditions in the concept of Manitou, were likely of paramount importance, something noted by Dwight (Vol.3:408) when he explained that, "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 ... the Indians, in both these instances, consider themselves as having been released from it [the obligation] a good number of years. Both of them were also raised upon extraordinary occasions. What those occasions were it may now be impossible to determine."

In 1753, almost three quarters of a century earlier than Reverend Dwight, the Reverend Gideon Hawley of Marshpee [southeastern Massachusetts] remarked in a letter that, "The largest heap [cairn] I ever observed, is that large collection of small stones on the mountain between Stockbridge and Great-Barrington [western Massachusetts]. We have a *sacrifice rock*, as it is termed, between Plymouth and Sandwich [eastern Massachusetts], to which stones and sticks are always cast by Indians who pass it. This custom or right is an acknowledgment of an invisible being. We may style him the unknown God, whom this people worship. This heap is his altar. The stone that is collected is the oblation of the traveler, which, if offered with a good mind, may be as acceptable as a consecrated animal. But perhaps these heaps of stones may be erected to a *local* deity, which is probably the case." (Hawley 1753, Rutenber 1992:372) When asked, "To whom is this worship offered?" The answer was, "To a manito; and by manito ..." (Kendal 1808). The *sacrifice rock* Reverend Marsh acknowledged as Manitou by the Indian people was also along an ancient Indian trail or foot path, the Bay Path, which ran toward the west from the tip of Cape Cod all the way to Springfield in western Massachusetts and on to Stockbridge and thence on to Albany, New York (Russell, 1980:200-203).

There is, however, some confusion of which 'heap' near Great Barrington was the renowned Monument Mountain cairn of great size and those that Rev. Dwight described. According to Lion Miles (2006), it is highly probable that the "large heap" that the Rev. Gideon Hawley saw and not those described by Rev. Dwight was in the vicinity of Risingdale (Massachusetts) approximately a half mile east of the Housatonic River. It was near an offshoot the main trail to Stockbridge, now the likely the route of State Hwy. 183. Another cairn was documented in Great Barrington at the confluence/junction of the Housatonic and Green River. In a rigorous examination of the historic record by Miles (2006), it is obvious that placement of both cairns, i.e. 'place' could act as a boundary marker. There are also historic accounts of 'place' at the confluence of rivers exhibiting the profound attribute of a junction or 'center' of the earth below the center of heaven above (Neill 1882:1). An informant at the time (1768) said that at the great stone heap which bore the Mohican name *Wawanaquasick* meaning "offering place," the Indians "added Stones to it and when they did so they said "Grand father I recover you." Written after the fact, by August, 1762 despite a profound or profane purpose, the once huge cairn was "all removed", the individual rocks used to build settlers chimneys and foundations (Miles, 2006).

Crossing the Hudson River in New York State and continuing west, the Bay Path was sometimes called the Ambassadors Road (Shank 2002:5). More often, though, it was called the Iroquois trail or Mohawk Trail where it ran west up the Mohawk Valley across the great watershed of New York to the Niagara River (Hulbert 1902:27). The former human footpath is now the approximate route of modern day U.S. Highway 20 running from eastern Massachusetts through New York (and west to Chicago). Along this path, one came to Schoharie Creek approximately 15 miles west of Albany. According to an early history of New York (Barber & Howe: 1841), "Somewhere between Schoharie creek and Caughnawaga commenced an Indian road or foot path, which led to Schoharie. Near this road, and within the Northern bounds of Schoharie county, has been seen from time immemorial a large pile of stones, which has given the name 'Stone heap patent' to the tract on which it occurs, as may be seen from ancient deeds." The trail was in fact the

Delaware River Path which ran north from Pennsylvania to the Mohawk Branch of the Delaware River in New York (Wallace 1987:44). The Delaware trail (now the route of New York State Highway 30A) intersected with the Iroquois trail (U.S. Highway 20). It was at or near the trail junction at present day Sloansville where the 'great stone heap' was encountered. Marking an extremely important physical location, it connected the eastern Atlantic Ocean watershed with the eastern Great Lakes and Ohio River Valley to the west. Because of the profound physical links associated with the presence of the cairn at this key junction, it was likely viewed as being profound and spiritually imbued with Manitou.

Despite its known antiquity, origin and profound status (Squire 1851:164-165), the 'great stone heap' met the same fate as the Monument Mountain cairn and was destroyed sometime between 1839 or 1840, the many tons of rocks used by the landowner to build a stone wall. It was no small task. In 1770, the cairn was estimated to be "... four rods wide (~65 feet), nearly two wide (~32 feet) [and] about ten feet in height, in its original form, consisting of small flat stones, which must have been many thousands in number" (Roscoe 1882:331). During the destruction of the cairn, it was reported that "A search was made for buried trinkets, but without any reward ..." (Daniel O'Neill, personal communication quoting a Sloansville history). A form of desecration, most if not all of the well known donation cairns met a similar fate. They were destroyed out of apathy, pure ignorance, maliciousness or by those seeking relics. No relics were ever found nor were the supposed bones of a burial. In 1822, Reverend Dwight (Vol. 3 p.408) recorded the destruction of the huge cairn he had seen only a year earlier: "On our way to Stockbridge[, Massachusetts] we went to the Indian monument, mentioned in a former part of these letters; and, to our great regret, found it broken up in the same manner, as that at New-Milford. I ought, in my account of that, to have added, that this mode of erecting monuments was adopted only on peculiar occasions. The common manner of Indian burial had nothing in it of this nature."

With many, and perhaps most 'donation' cairns, there was seldom, if ever, evidence or memory of a specific burial, the overall story perhaps a Native version of folklore passed down for generations and accepted without question (Kellar 1960:404-408). When the Great Barrington cairn at Monument Mountain was dismantled, there was no evidence of a burial beneath it (Miles 2006). What is likely is that most donation cairns greatly predated the early historic time period and tribal structure. Early residents of western Massachusetts remarked that the 'bottom stones' of the Great Barrington stone heap were deeply embedded, suggesting great antiquity (Bender 2003, Miles 2006). The confusion may have come from a common tradition of sometimes piling rocks over a deceased person and then, by extension, applied to any and all piles of stones including the donation stone cairns. By tradition, the large cairns, unlike the small ones covering a known burial, were still viewed as profound because of the legend, hence the continuing 'donation' by passers-by, a form of propitiation to the spirit of place. However, it is true that excavation of a number of smaller cairns revealed that they did, indeed, contain human remains, likely built as monuments to the deceased (Fox 1922, Franzen and Weir 1979).

Arguably, the most spectacular single burial cairn in North America is located on a prominence at L'Anse Amour in Labrador. Unlike the hand-sized rocks in the donation cairns, the round, eight meters in diameter, convex-shaped cairn at L'Anse Amour was/is

constructed of medium sized boulders (Figure 8). When excavated, the body of a child covered in red ochre was discovered at its base. Based on dating of the human remains and charcoal from two ritual fires near the body, the cairn was constructed approximately 7500 years old, the oldest known burial cairn in North America. It is attributed to the ancient Maritime Archaic culture (Fitzhugh 1978, Tuck 1976). However, despite the early date of construction, the location on a prominence overlooking the waters of the Strait of Belle Isle was, without doubt, the primary attribute in site selection. The carefully chosen physical location helps to convey *presence*, a phenomenal attribute evoking the numinous experience of Manitou (Steinbring 1992). In addition, the east-west orientation of the burial and two large rocks set at right angles north and south of the burial upon which ritual fires were built created quartered/sacred space, a sacred form of the number four. In this special circumstance, the divine interposes and is linked to the concepts of Manitou and establishment of (cosmic) order, attributes well beyond a common burial or simple rock-pile memorial. The combination of the profound attributes of prominence, orientation toward the direction east and the color red extend well beyond a common burial or memorial (Bender 2009:6, Ritchie 1969:178).



Figure 8. The early Archaic age, Maritime Archaic cairn at L'Anse Amour, Labrador which covered a red ochre burial, the oldest known cairn burial in North America. Terry J. Deveau photo.

If a temporal (proto-Algonquin) linguistic connection for transmitting shared traditions existed with the Maritime Archaic or 'Red Paint People' (5000-1000 B.C.), a distinct possibility (Maxwell 1978:31, Ritchie 1969:79-83), there may be a corollary

contemporary with them in Wisconsin. Seeking a cultural affiliation during a highway upgrade project and required environmental impact survey in October, 1993 an upright, rounded triangular-shaped stone standing on a crescent-shaped cairn was brought to my attention by a member of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (Figure 9). It was one of two cairns in Fond du Lac County that share a connection with each other and in part, possibly L'Anse Amour. Both cairns were discovered within a concentrated geographic area or Archaic age 'precinct' in southeastern Wisconsin, the broad area exhibiting a 'definite Archaic presence' (Bender 1995:6, Bender 2008a:66, Steinbring 1997). The two cairns were emplaced along ancient, documented trails and/or a prehistoric trail route adjacent to a spring, each likely functioning as a trail shrine (Bender 1995:6&9, Steinbring 1997:24, Ralph Redfox and Leola One Feather, personal communication). Both trails, one an important human-induced feature within the precinct, connect the continental sub-divide between the Great Lakes and Mississippi/Missouri Rivers drainage basins. Each cairn also exhibits profound attributes which act to link the sky and cosmos. Furthermore, both the cairns and trails are connected to sites within the (Archaic age) precinct where the distinctive Maritime Archaic slate blades and their identical Old Copper Culture tool forms have been discovered (Bender 2011b:9 Steinbring 1997). Unlike the cairn at L'Anse Amour, however, the two cairns are not thought to cover burials, constructed instead to exhibit attributes associated with Manitou and landscape phenomena.



Figure 9. Crescent shaped cairn with a rounded, triangular-shaped upright or Manitou stone. The cairn sits on the north end of a small hill along an ancient trail in southeastern Wisconsin. The view is looking west.

The cairn with a triangular upright, named the Hesselink site after the local landowner shares two important connections with features and/or attributes at L'Anse Amour; the view shed and quartered space. Located on the north end of a small drumlin or prominence, there is a panoramic, 360° view of the surrounding countryside with a commanding view toward the Niagara escarpment on the eastern horizon. The axis of the crescent-shaped cairn is aligned east-west. The fore mentioned upright stone which, when viewed from the south has a pronounced triangular shape. It is extremely weathered on the upper edges and is centered on the crescent-shaped cairn (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Frontal or south view (looking north) of the dolomite, triangular or conical-shape Manitou stone located on the north end of a small hill in Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin (see Figure 9). Note the abrasion or weathered surface on the apex or point of the Manitou produced by either long-term weathering, abrasion while being shaped, or both. It is one of at least three large triangular-shape stones that once stood erect on the hilltop's north end.

On the south edge at the center of the cairn there is a saddle-shaped 'altar' stone which is at the end of a north-south aligned row of spaced stones. Two small triangular-shaped stones stood on both ends of the cairn (Figure 11a). In addition, two other approximately one meter tall, triangular shaped stones (now tipped) are on an east-west alignment south of the cairn (Figures 11b&c). There is a definite northward orientation viewed from between the two other triangular-shaped stones towards the 'altar' stone and triangular

upright. The entire scene creates what Hall (1985:184-185) describes as a 'center shrine' (Figure 11d). The northward alignment of the row of spaced stones terminating with the 'altar' stone and then the triangular standing stone itself, pointing up, suggests an earth navel or umbilical (Hall 1985:184-185). The alignment symbolically connects the earth with the sky at the place where the stars revolve around one point in the night sky, the 'hole-in-the-sky', now occupied by Polaris, the 'north star'. However, in its entirety, the cairn, stone row and uprights were designed to quarter space, establishing order in conjunction with the ideal of center.



Figure 11a. View looking approximately east of tipped triangular upright on the west end of the crescent-shaped cairn, the triangular upright in the cairn center and the 'altar' stone on the center, south edge of the cairn. Another tipped triangular upright on the cairn east end is not visible in the photo.



Figures 11b & c. The two, approximate meter high and wide, triangular-shaped stones which once stood upright to the south of the cairn. Figure 11b (at left) is west of Figure 11c (at right). North is to the top in Figure 11b and to the right in Figure 11c.



Figure 11d. View looking north between the two triangular stones (Figures 11 b&c) toward the 'altar' stone in-line with the triangular upright or Manitou stone standing in the center of the east-west aligned, crescent-shaped mound creating a 'center shrine' with the direction north as the focus. Note the tipped triangular upright to the left of the Manitou stone (see Figure 11a).

Over the years, a farm field located about one half mile to the east of the hill and cairn has yielded approximately 1000 artifacts, the vast majority Archaic in age, i.e. predating 1500-2000 B.C. The artifact assemblage infers an Archaic age span of use or origin for the area containing the cairn/trail shrine. It is also near the site where the distinctive Maritime Archaic slate blade was discovered. A proposed Archaic age for the trail shrine establishment and ritual use is further supported by other corroborating evidence (Bender 2003:3, Bender 2013:54-56). While on a field trip during the 1999 International Rock Art Congress (IRAC) held at Ripon, Mr. Ralph Redfox, a traditional Cheyenne elder and healer, recounted an ancient Cheyenne oral tradition that upright stones like those at the Hesselink site were placed on the north end of the hill as "guardians against the ice returning [from the north]". The Cheyenne believe that as a hill slopes up toward the north, it gets colder (Grinnell 1972:94). The story has been interpreted as suggesting a late Pleistocene or early Archaic period origin (10,000 – 8000 B.C.) for it and placement of the upright stones. There is additional evidence which may support the idea of an early to mid Archaic origin. During an inventory of the sacred rocks and boulders in southern Alberta, Canada, two-thirds of them were discovered to occupy a prominence with a northward focus. Furthermore, the date or age of utilization firmly placed all in the early to mid Archaic (Freeman et al 1992:3, Steinbring 1991, Steinbring et al 1995). According to ancient tradition, the Cheyenne primary direction of focus is north (Powell 1969:27,467,617). It is considered by both the Algonquin and Siouan-speaking Woodland and Plains tribes, both of whom migrated west to the Great Plains from the upper Great Lakes area, to be the most ancient and primary direction (Bender 2003b:28&30, Bender 2008a:67, Powell 1969:27,467&617; Schlesier:1987:62).<sup>1</sup>

The second cairn of note is within the near center of the precinct constructed, in part, to mark the location of at least four spring discharges very near an ancient path winding along the edge of an outcrop of the Niagara escarpment (Figure 12). Named the Wagner Site for the current landowner, the cairn is oval in shape, approximately 33 feet long by twelve feet wide by four feet high. It is composed of medium to large-sized boulders, some of them likely 'spirit' or Manitou stones in their own right (Steinbring et al 1995). The main axis of the cairn is aligned to the winter solstice sunrise first gleam glimpsed in the valley between two hills to the southeast (Figure 13). Here, again, Manitou imposes transforming the cairn and scene to a higher cosmic purpose and order beyond a simple rock pile marking a spring along a trail or footpath. Furthermore, artifacts discovered at a number of former campsites in the vicinity of the springs and cairn during the 1995 WEPCO survey (Bender 1995, Steinbring et al 1995) also exhibit the 'definite Archaic

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<sup>1</sup> The proto-Algonquin language core is considered by many scholars to be one of the most ancient languages in North America whose distribution is related to Ice Age geography, glaciation and the north (Rogers et al 1990). It is also reflected by the rock art found in territory still occupied by Algonquin-speaking tribes such as the Cree who predated later migrations by the Anishinabe including the Chippewa or Ojibwe tribe (Honigman 1981, Rhodes & Todd 1981, Steinbring 1981). As Lanteigne (1989, 1990:127) remarked: "These proto-Algonkian populations are believed to have been present in the Lake-of-the-Woods region as early as 11,000-8,500 years ago and expanded northeast, north and northwest during the retreat of the Laurentian ice sheet and Glacial Lake Agassiz." The early migrations and time period are likely responsible for any Ice Age 'memories' and/or oral traditions related to the direction north, ice and extreme cold. Most if not all these tribes (including the Cheyenne) who have preserved memories of the north (i.e. cold and ice) thoroughly reject any mention of a migration from Asia over the Bering Land Bridge during the late Wisconsin glaciation as an origin of the stories (Deloria 1995:48,97-99) saying, if asked, that "we were always here" and "are no second cousin to a Chinaman" (personal communication).

presence' associated with the Hesselink site, other near-by habitation sites and throughout virtually the entire survey area and beyond.

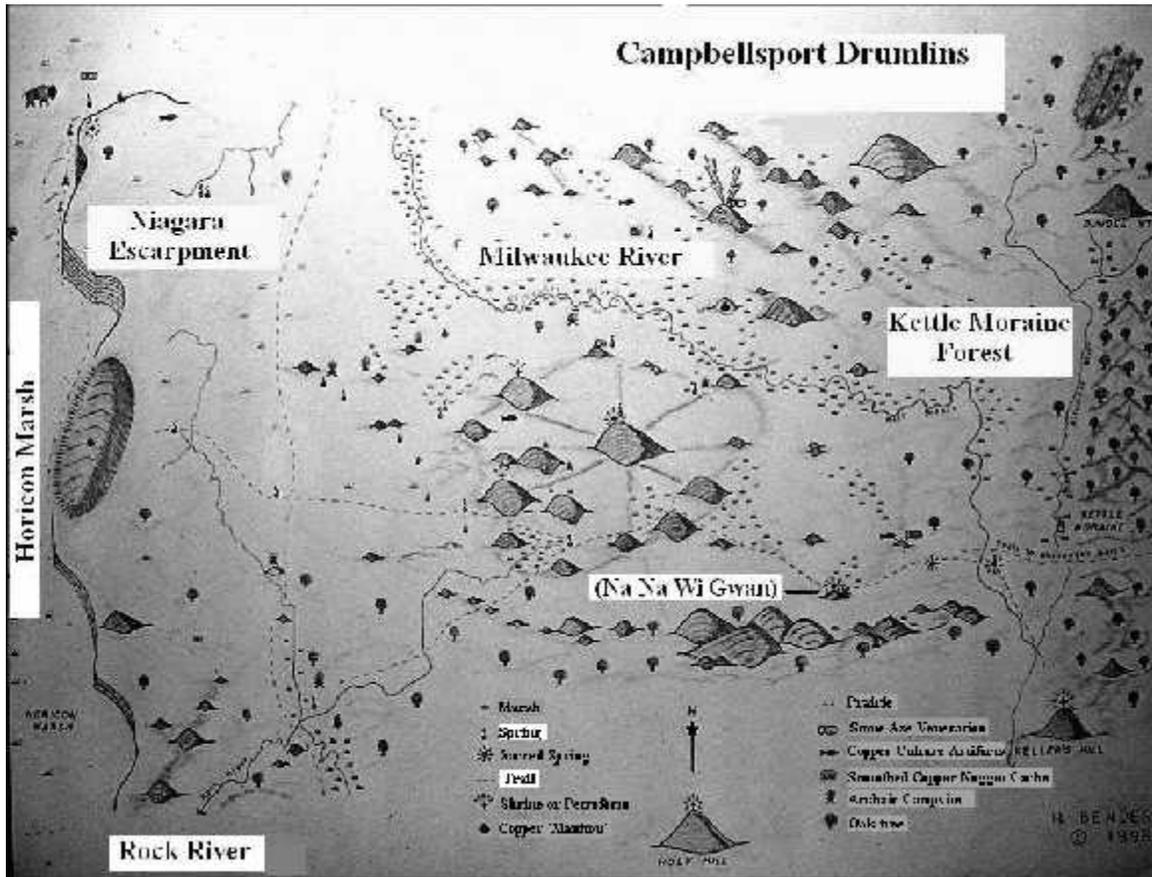


Figure 12. Survey map of the ‘sacred’ precinct discovered during the 1995 WEPCO survey. The circle of hills or drumlins (at center) is to scale, based on a 7.5 Minute quadrangle topographic map. Note the springs, ‘sacred’ springs, shrines and petroform (including cairns) connected by the trails, a signature feature of the area. The eastern and northern parts of the map (at top and right) are within the Milwaukee River/Great Lakes/North Atlantic drainage basin. The Rock River in the western and southern parts of the map flows to the Mississippi River and Gulf of Mexico. The continental sub-divide formed by the distinctive topography runs at a northwest angle from Na Na Wi Gwan to the Niagara Escarpment. Its approximate center is the highest hill (at map center), marked by a number of monoliths, bison effigy stones and other petroform. The summer solstice sunset line also runs along the continental sub-divide from Na Na Wi Gwan (a ‘medicine wheel’ or sun circle site) to the highest hill at center in the map to the edge of the Niagara Escarpment approximately eleven miles distant (Bender 2008a & 2011b). A Cheyenne delegation performed a ceremony on top of the hill ‘pinning’ it as [a] ‘center’ (of the universe), establishing its importance, sanctity and ‘place’ in Cheyenne cosmology and origins.



Figure 13. Photo of the cairn at the Wagner Site during the winter solstice sunrise. Note the cairn long axis alignment with the winter solstice sun rise in the valley. The offset of the sun's disk to the north (left) is consistent with the proposed Archaic date of construction (2000-1500 B.C.), a consequence of the earth's shift-of-the obliquity-of-the ecliptic over time.

### *Triangular-Shaped Standing Stones*

A salient feature at L'Anse Amour not generally discussed or shown in most photos is a triangular-shaped standing stone in the near vicinity of the cairn (Figure 14). In Wisconsin, the Hesselink cairn with its triangular upright in the middle of the cairn shares this feature as does the Nehls cairn which also has a triangular-shaped upright centered in the very top of the large cairn (Figure 15). The suggestive form is also found at number of other sites in Wisconsin spreading west into the Great Plains. Therefore, the corollary with L'Anse Amour would not be complete without a fuller discussion of the triangular-shaped upright or standing stones.



Figure 14. Triangular upright at L'Anse Amour standing near the cairn and visible from the sea. Terry J. Deveau photo.



Figure 15. The Nehls cairn with a Manitou stone in the center. The cairn is near the junction of seven trails on the south end of the world-renowned Horicon Marsh.

Often described as Manitou stones (Bender 2003:27-28), these conical or rounded-top pyramidal uprights suggest the shape of a person with a blanket draped over their head and shoulders (Figure 16). The outline is sometimes perceived as the shape of a spirit or apparition, the inspiration for those wearing a bed sheet costume on Halloween night dressed as a ghost. Some may have been worked to achieve the outline, most surely natural. They sometimes had rock art on the surfaces. William Pidgeon (1858:180), while traveling through the area of southwestern Wisconsin near Prairie du Chien in the 1830s, described a triangular upright he called Paint Rock which "presents a pyramidal form, standing five feet above the surface of the earth, gradually tapering from the ground upward ... covered with painted ... figures of various kinds."



Figure 16. *Trail of Three* ceramic plaque with blanket draped women showing the rounded profile compared to a Manitou or 'spirit' stone profile (see detail from Figure 9 at right).

The most massive triangular upright I have personally seen is in southern Wisconsin on a hill overlooking Goose Lake. It is a highly weathered gray, igneous rock approximately a meter and half high with a base almost as wide (Figure 17a). A semi-circle of stones partially surrounds it (Figure 17b). Little is known of its origin or cultural history other than to note its great presence.



Figure 17a. The Goose Lake monolith, a massive triangular-shape upright on a hill overlooking Goose Lake near Lake Mills, Wisconsin. The yellow board is one meter. View is looking north.



Figure 17b. The Goose Lake monolith and partial circle of boulders which surrounds it. View is looking east.

Although establishing a cultural context for Manitou stones can be difficult in the short term, a number of triangular uprights were discovered in southeastern Wisconsin at the so-called ‘medicine wheel’ site which was extensively studied over a six year period (Bender 2008a&b). Three of five known to be there have been described in a previous publication (Bender 2008b:54-55). However, there are two others on site that merit further attention. One of the two presents a triangular form, the other a ‘pyramidal’ form. Both are imbued with Manitou and hold a spiritual connotation inherent with their placement when juxtaposed in relationship to other profound site features.

The triangular upright is located on the northeast side of the site’s primary feature, the approximately 10 meter in diameter stone circle (Figures 18a&b). Its location to the northeast of the large stone circle is, without doubt, highly intentional (Figure 18c). There are surviving traditions amongst the Plains Indian groups of this being a very sacred position to occupy. Northeast (NE) is the direction that thunder (and lightning) comes from in the Cheyenne tradition, of primary importance and representing a spirit named Nonoma (Schlesier 1987:5, 8, 96–97, 118; Bender 2008a:56, Bender 2011b:27). Together with the three other semi-cardinal directions (SE, NW, SW), NE also acts to quarter space on a cosmic scale with the sun at center that the ‘medicine wheel’ or main (sun) circle likely represents. All represent an ancient, spiritually charge metaphor which within the Plains Indian universe and world view (Bender 2008b, Parks 1996:86-88,94).



Figure 18a. The approximately 60cm high, triangular upright located on the northeast side of the circle of stone at the ‘medicine wheel’ site now known as Na Na Wi Gwan (Bender 2008a).



Figure 18b. Photo showing the triangular upright on the northeast side of the approximate 10m diameter stone circle at Na Na Wi Gwan (see map, Figure 12). View is looking north.



Figure 18c. Winter solstice sunset scene hi-lighting the triangular upright (at center of photo) and circle of stone at Na Na Wi Gwan. View is looking toward the south.

A short distance west of the ‘sacred’ spring on the site (Bender 1992), the ‘pyramidal’ upright sits along side a well worn trail along the north base of the low hill where the sun circle is located (Figure 19a). The upright is approximately a meter or waist high and surrounded by a partial circle of stones (Figure 19b).



Figure 19a. Photo of the approximately one meter high, ‘pyramidal’ upright along the trail leading toward the ‘sacred’ spring at Na Na Wi Gwan. View is looking east.



Figure 19b. The ‘pyramidal’ upright and partial circle of spaced stones which surround it. View is looking north.

Traveling a short distance east on the trail, to the west above the spring are a number of petroform, two earthen mounds where red ochre offerings were excavated and a tipped monolith (Figure 20). The tipped monolith is about a meter high tapering to a small, rounded top and at the head of a stone row leading down toward the spring (Figures 21a&b).

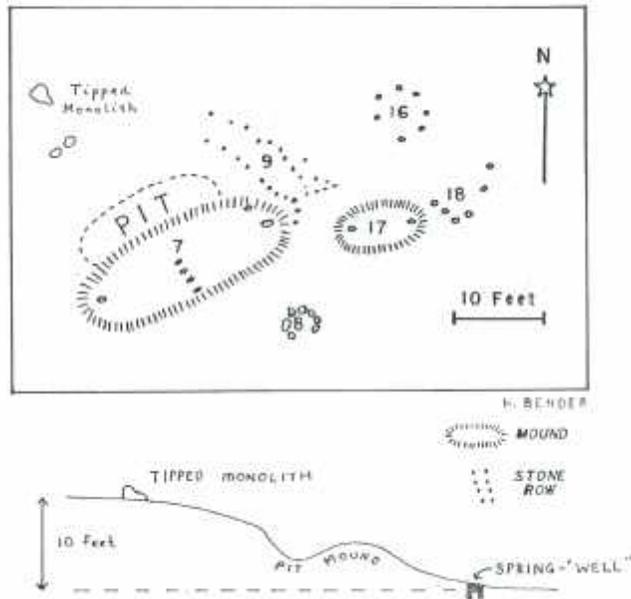


Figure 20. Survey and sketch map (Bender 1992) showing the position of the tipped monolith. No. 8 is the ‘sacred’ spring and the pit by the mound (No. 7) is where the red ochre was recovered.



Figure 21a. The tipped monolith showing its flat bottom on which it stood and rounded, knob-like top. View is looking east.



Figure 21b. Photo showing the location of the tipped monolith in relationship to the parallel rows of spaced rock (lower right) leading toward or from the ‘sacred’ spring or ‘well’ (see Figure 20). View is looking approximately north.

The trail passing through this venerated site connects the many springs along it as it skirts the south edge of the ‘sacred’ precinct (Figure 12). Some of these springs were considered sacred where offerings were sacrificed to them including Old Copper Culture artifacts suggesting a time period well over 3500 years ago (Bender 1992, 2008a:48, 2011b; Steinbring 1997). The trail can be looked at as a long east-west portage that connects the continental sub-divide of the Milwaukee River and Lake Michigan/Great Lakes drainage basin with the Horicon Marsh/Rock River and Mississippi River drainage basin (Bender 1992, Bender 2008a:48). However, it was more than a long portage also being a physical and spiritual conduit for the beliefs that were transported along it which included the ideal of Manitou.

Resting alongside a north-south segment of the prehistoric trail network in eastern Fond du Lac County is another triangular-shaped stone that once stood upright, but having been toppled is now laying on its side (Figure 22a). Approximately a meter high, the rock is red-rhyolite porphyry, an intensely red-colored glacial erratic. The rock’s deep red color, the sacred color for Native people since ancient times (Bender 2003:28, Bender 2004:9,13), and the natural triangular shape are attributes likely dictating why it

was chosen to be erected as a Manitou stone. When upright, it stood on a low earthen mound surrounded by a circle of spaced stones (Figure 22b).



Figure 22a. Tipped, approximately one meter high, red-rhyolite porphyry, triangular-shaped Manitou stone resting on a low, earthen mound. View is looking north.



Figure 22b. The tipped Manitou stone, mound and circle of stone that surrounded all partially visible in the photo. View is looking east.

The mound is located at the east base of a hill defining a trail junction where a spring once discharged (Figure 22c). The short trail spur runs uphill, terminating near the top of hill's east slope where the Starman petroform was discovered (Bender 1994a, Bender 2013:51-54). Because the Starman petroform is dated at ca. 2000-1500 B.C., as are the vast majority of all the artifacts recovered from the proximal habitation sites, the Manitou stone at the base of the hill is thought to be coeval. In addition, the extremely rough texture of the vertical surfaces exposed to the weather when compared to the smooth, protected base it once stood on help support the premise, the differential weathering of the surfaces helping to make a compelling argument for its antiquity (Figure 22d). Furthermore, as a red-colored, triangular-shaped Manitou stone, it did not stand alone.



Figure 22c. Annotated aerial photo of the tipped monolith (Manitou), trails, stone circle and Starman headstone at the Starman site, Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin.



Figure 22d. Photo showing the remarkable degree of difference in differential weathering between the tipped monolith's smooth, flat bottom (at right) and the highly weathered, exfoliated side exposed to the weather (at left) when standing.

First brought to my attention by a member of the family who owns an adjacent farm a short distance north on the trail, four spaced red-colored uprights once stood in a north-south row on a low hill slope (Bender 1994b). One, a triangular shaped rock, is still in place although it has slid down-hill (Figure 23). The second was likely buried, in place, near the hill slope. The third has a Manitou shape consistent with others that have more of human-like profile (Figure 24). It was moved to a fence row but has been moved back to its original position and re-erected by the landowner. The fourth was moved to an adjacent property, placed as a dramatic centerpiece in the rock garden. The intensely red upright has been interpreted as a standing bison with its head down in outline (Figure 25). Not an isolated example, numerous other bison effigy stones have been identified in southeastern Wisconsin (Bender 2013), the animal and iconography a tangible link to the western Great Plains beyond the Mississippi River.



Figure 23. Red granite or rhyolite triangular-shaped rock that once stood upright, but has now slid downhill and is laying on its side. View is looking south.



Figure 24. Red granite upright that may have been shaped to a triangular peak at top. It has now been returned to where it once stood in the north-south line of four spaced Manitou or ‘spirit’ stones.



Figure 25. A massive red-rhyolite porphyry upright that was moved from the north-south line of spaced rocks to its present location. It is likely a bison effigy with the well defined hump and head to the right.

Shifting focus west of the Mississippi River, descriptions and accounts of triangular-shaped uprights dating from the 19<sup>th</sup> century are worth taking note of for their similarity to those in the east. A remarkable combination of piled stones constructed in the triangular-shape resembling a seated human profile was noted by the transcontinental railroad surveyors at Spring Creek in western Kansas shortly after the American Civil War (Figure 26). Quoting the June 15, 1867 issue of *Harper's Weekly*, "On the highest points, overlooking the country for miles, the Indians have built cairns or statues of rough stone, which at a short distance bear a wonderful resemblance to a warrior wrapped in a blanket." The description with comparison to some of those in the east is remarkable considering the distance. As to purpose, the caption went on to say, "Whether these were intended for beacons or breast-works, decoys or monuments, the Indians themselves best know." Here in Kansas out on what was the frontier, the duality of a beacon for travelers intertwined with a spiritual purpose was glimpsed by the author, a correspondent traveling with the railroad survey crew.



Figure 26. *Harper's Weekly* illustration of triangular-shaped cairns at Spring Creek, Kansas resembling a person wrapped in a blanket. *Herman Bender* collection.

A second example of a cairn with an upright is in a class by itself because of the iconic imagery it projected. In the spiritually charged scene painted by Karl Bodmer during the summer of 1833, the artist captured the image of a cairn with a standing stone capped by a bison skull (Figure 27).

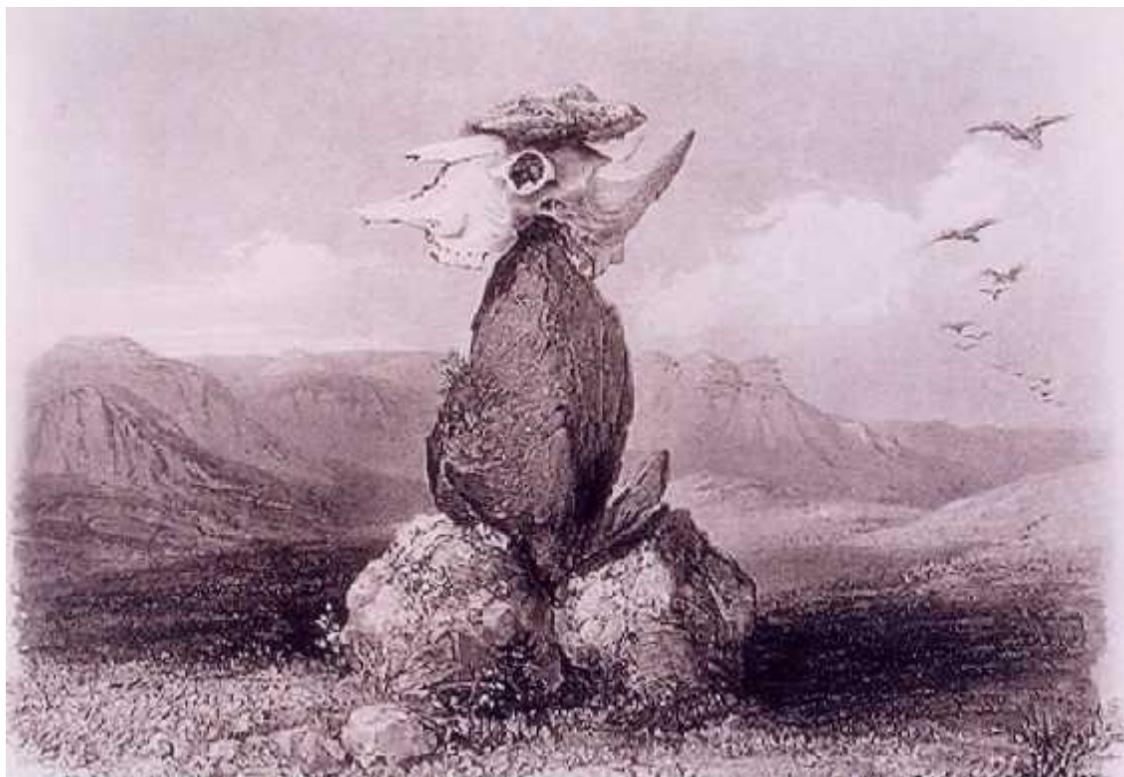


Figure 27. Print of the Assiniboin cairn and triangular upright capped by a bison skull painted by Karl Bodmer near Fort Union, Williston, North Dakota. The large rocks or boulders supporting the cairn appear as lithic bison skulls in some versions of the painting and prints.

Of great ritualistic significance to the Assiniboin, it stood on hill overlooking Fort Union near Williston, North Dakota at the confluence of the Missouri and the Yellowstone rivers. For the Assiniboin and other Plains tribes, the buffalo was an essential of life. Prince Maximilian described the cairn as a medicine sign of which there is little doubt. But the location on a hill or prominence at the junction of two major rivers in the semi-arid western Great Plains was likely intentional, and added phenomenal attributes to the dramatic scene, one meant to invoke blessings for the people.

#### *Sacred Rocks, Boulders and Rock Outcrops*

Many rocks and boulders considered sacred were spread across the mid-latitudes of North America (Freeman et al 1990). Some were famous, others not, with a high percentage of those mentioned in the northern tier of Midwest states glacial erratics (Bender 2011a). One of the more famous erratics was Spirit Rock which overlooked the Falls of St. Anthony near the Mendota/ St. Paul area in Minnesota (Figure 28). However, despite forgotten histories and gradually fading from tradition or memory, three rocks in Minnesota bear examination for their Manitou and sacred qualities. All are glacial erratics, remnants from another time and place which virtually stood alone on the prairie.

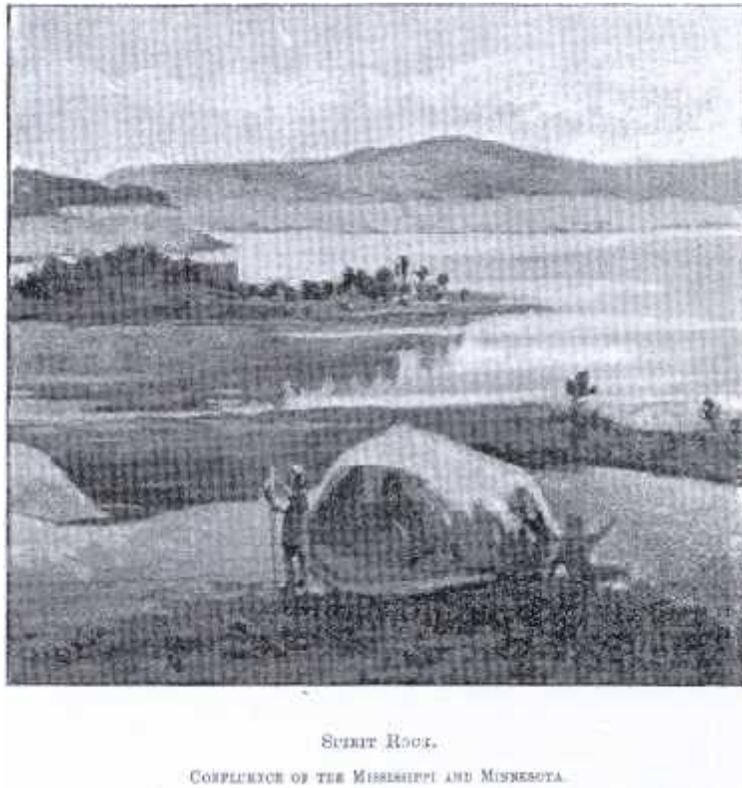


Figure 28. Illustration dating from 1894 of Spirit Rock in eastern Minnesota.

The ‘Red Rock’ of the Sioux is a glacial erratic that was sacred to Native Americans who, before 1862, left many offerings at the boulder. It can still be seen, having finally been moved to Newport on the banks of the Mississippi River approximately eight miles due east of Mendota where Spirit Rock was once venerated. Originally, Red Rock was in grove of trees on the east side of the Mississippi River overlooking the river valley to the west (Figure 29). The rock itself is a pink granite, now highly weathered to a dull gray color. It is approximately 4 feet long, 2.5 feet wide, and 2.5 feet high (Callahan 1997a). To the Sioux it was known as *Eyah-Shaw* which, when translated, means “Red Rock.” Because the Indians had no explanation on how this rock the other glacial erratics got to the prairie, they were a mystery and like Spirit Rock, said to “have dropped from the clouds” (Bender 2011a:161). Coming from the sky, the rock was imbued with *wakan*, the Sioux word for spirit (Bender 2003). Furthermore, like Spirit Rock, Red Rock was enhanced with paint, a description by William Folsom (1888:384) saying, “It is painted in stripes, twelve in number, two inches wide and from two to six inches apart. The north end has a rudely drawn picture of the sun, and a rude face with fifteen rays.” The stripes always faced the east. The Sioux often visited bringing it offerings and renewing its vermillion paint (Upham 1969:570-571). The painted face and stripes were still clearly visible in the 1909 photo decades after the Sioux were expelled following the 1862 uprising in Minnesota (Figure 29).

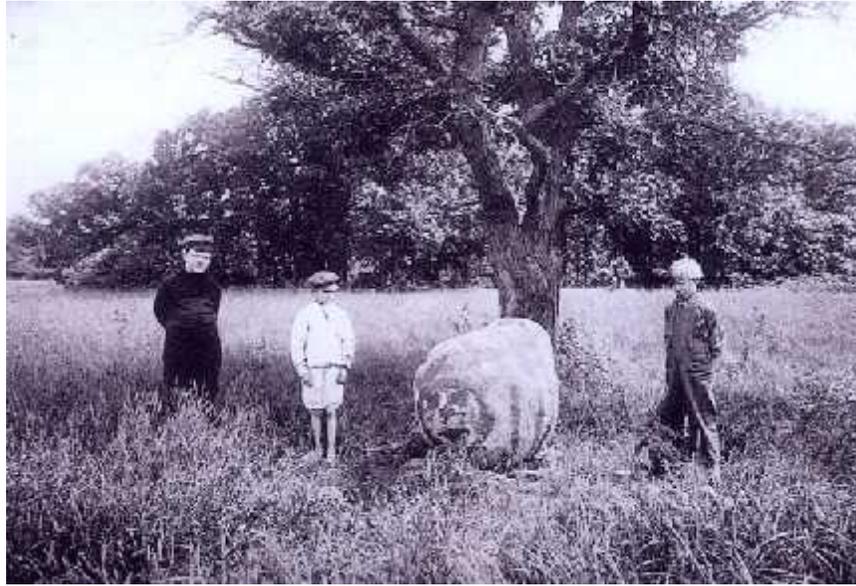


Figure 29. The Red Rock of the Sioux in its original grove of trees and paint, ca. 1909.

Another sacred rock of the Sioux, 'Rolling Rock', was recorded near the mouth of Rolling Stone Creek where it meets the Mississippi River, approximately ten miles north of Winona. The Dakota or Sioux name for the stream was/is *Eyan-omen-man-met-pah*, the literal translation being "the stream where the stone rolls" which was said to have furnished the altar-stone (Bunnell 1897:430, Upham 1969:583). According to Bunnell (1897:430), the Rolling Stone was described as a dark colored 'trap boulder' [basalt or gabbro] about 15 inches in diameter, and nearly perfectly round. He further stated that, "There are several granite and other well rounded boulders in the county, but my informant, Thos. La Blanc, said that the Sioux had a superstitious reverence for that particular stone, which from its weight and color, they thought was Wah-kon, or sacred." When Bunnell saw it, the altar stone was at the foot of a 20' tall pole in what is now Winona, at the ceremonial area of the Dakota chief Wapasha's village. People from far and near came to leave offerings on or near the stone, a custom that may have originated in far more ancient times (Niles 2005:25). There is no mention of the eventual fate of the Rolling Stone.

One reason the glacial rock or erratic attracted attention was that Winona is in the 'Driftless Area', a great part of what is now southwestern Wisconsin and southeastern Minnesota that was surrounded by glacial ice but never glaciated (Schultz 1986:156). It was only after crossing the Mississippi River that rounded, glacial erratics born by the melt-water were encountered. Further west in Minnesota, a tongue or lobe of ice from the great glaciers did descend south. The glacial ice could and did transport much larger boulders, some the size of a house. West of Winona, a massive, red-colored glacial erratic possessing profound attributes connected to the ideals of Manitou was recently recognized in Mower County. The rock is a highly weathered red granite which presents a rounded, turtle profile (Figures 30a&b).



Figure 30a. The Mower County red granite, glacial erratic showing its profound, turtle-like shape profile. The turtle is perceived as a representation of the earth by a majority of American Indians and in their creation epics. Scott Doblar photograph.



Figure 30b. Opposite side view of the Mower County glacial erratic with Robert Keiper from Winona, Minnesota for scale. Scott Doblar photograph.

From a geologic standpoint, the exfoliated surface expresses millennia of weathering in place which has also helped to produce a deep fissure along a joint or bedding plane. It is within this wide cracks that other boulders were deposited as offerings (Figures 30c&d), harkening back to the donation cairn or the 'split-wedge' exploring the American Indian concept of a yoni (Muller 2009:17).



Figure 30c. Photo of two rocks wedged into the weathered fissure of the Mower County red granite erratic. Scott Doblar Photograph.



Figure 30d. View of the opposite side of the Mower County erratic showing a deeply wedged rock in the fissure likely meant as an offering or yoni, i.e. a male form inserted into the (female rock) fissure. Scott Doblar photograph.

The tradition of sacred boulders or ‘medicine rocks’ existed farther west on the Great Plains extending to the foot hills of the Rocky Mountains and beyond. Kevin Callahan (1997b) compiled an inventory of the venerated rocks and boulders in his article, *Petroglyph Boulders and Sacred Stones of the Upper Midwest*. Gleaned from the historic record, the article included those found on the Plains in the northern United States and lower Canada. Two of note not mentioned by Callahan were recorded by George Bird Grinnell during his late 19<sup>th</sup> century travels while living with and recording the Blackfeet Indians stories and customs. Grinnell (1962:262-263) said, “Another sacred object is the medicine rock of the Marias [River]. It was a huge boulder of reddish sandstone ... formerly ... on top of the [river] bluff, but as the soil about it is worn away by the wind and rain, it is slowly moving downhill. The Indians believe it to be alive, and make presents to it.” One other sacred boulder Grinnell left a description of incorporated the human-like qualities many of the Manitou stones incorporated. “Down on the Milk River, east of the Sweet Grass Hills, is another medicine rock. It is shaped something like a man’s body, and looks like a person sitting on top the bluff. Whenever the Blackfeet pass this rock, they make presents to it.” When the passers-by gave an article of clothing, they would sometimes put it on the rock and then say “when you look at it, it seems more like a person.” By this act, the transformation of the inanimate into the animate was complete, something the Indians so highly valued and regarded as sacred or an object of worship.

Manitou or spiritually-charged rocks could, however, exist on a much larger scale than boulders and glacial erratics (Bender 2011a). Medicine Rocks (State Park) in Carter County in eastern Montana is a natural rock outcrop of sandstone pillars sixty to eighty feet (18 to 24 m) high. The undulations, holes, and tunnels formed in the sandstone after millions of years of weathering helped to draw attention to them (Figure 31).



Figure 31. Archival image of Medicine Rocks, Carter County, Montana.

Many Plains Indian tribes resided here permanently or temporarily, including the Arikara, Assiniboine Sioux, Cheyenne, Crow, Mandan, and Sioux. Considered a sacred holy place by all, a Sioux Indian, Charging Bear, said Medicine Rocks was a place “where the spirits stayed and the medicine men prayed.” The sound of the wind, the natural, weathered shape of the rocks, the holes in the rocks, the cathedral-like setting and the springs that flow year-round are all profound attributes identified with Manito or spirit. The Sioux Indian name for the unusual stone columns is Inyan-oka-la-ka, or “Rock with a Hole in It.” The holes in the rock and wind blowing in them produces whistling sounds, contributing to the phenomenal attribute of sound (Steinbring 1992). Native Americans were also attracted to the site because of the many medicinal plants which grew there and the fossil seashells which could be gathered for decorations (French 2005).

### *Profile Rocks*

Rock outcrops and boulders that bear a somewhat eerie if not remarkable resemblance to a human profile were highly regarded and considered to be spiritually endowed with Manito or Wakan (Bender 2011a:161-162,168). If a picture is indeed worth a thousand words, then photographs of the large profile rocks scattered about the continent need little explanation. Curiously, the record and image of many has mainly survived in old Post Card images from the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. All are natural rock outcrops or boulders worn by time and weather into what the human eye recognizes and mind perceives as an animate form, not inanimate rock. Their mystique is further enhanced by the names people gave them, usually identified with an Indian chief or lore. Rather than write a description, images of each are presented with a name or description and any relevant information concerning what is known about the individual rock and/or profile (Figures 32- 38).



Figure 32. Known as the *Old Man of Joshua's Mountain*, the Assonet profile rock is a fifty foot high granite rock located in Freetown, Massachusetts just outside Assonet village and near the Freetown State Forest. The Wampanoag believed it to be an image of Chief Massasoit who had befriended the Pilgrims.

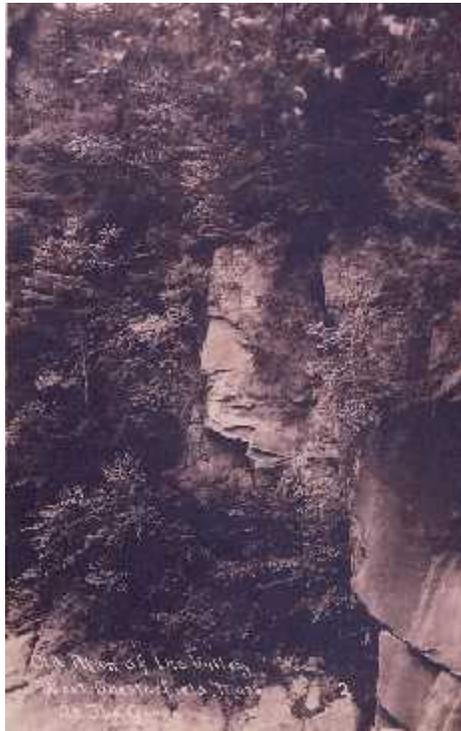


Figure 33. The *Old Man of the Valley* near West Chesterfield, Massachusetts.

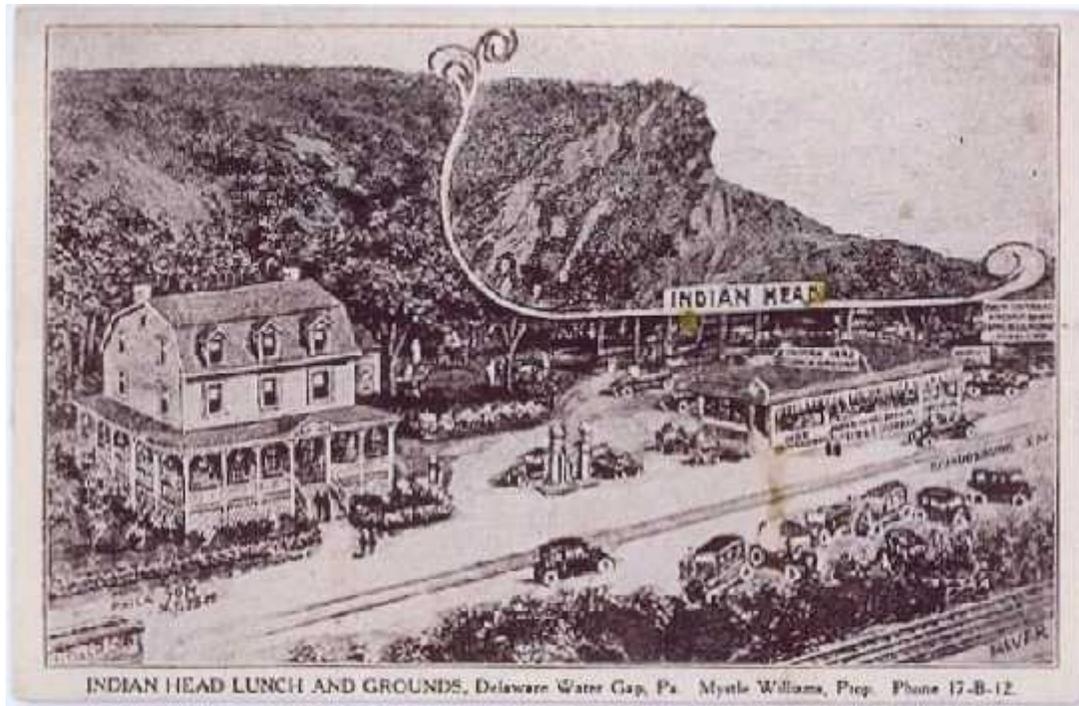


Figure 34a. An old postcard showing the *Indian Head* Lunch and Grounds, Delaware Water Gap, Pennsylvania.



Figure 34b. Photo showing the *Indian Head* outcrop at Delaware Water Gap, Pennsylvania.



Figure 35. A 1903 postcard showing the *Rock Face of Washington*, Mamaroneck, New York. It is “purely natural” according to the hand-written description.

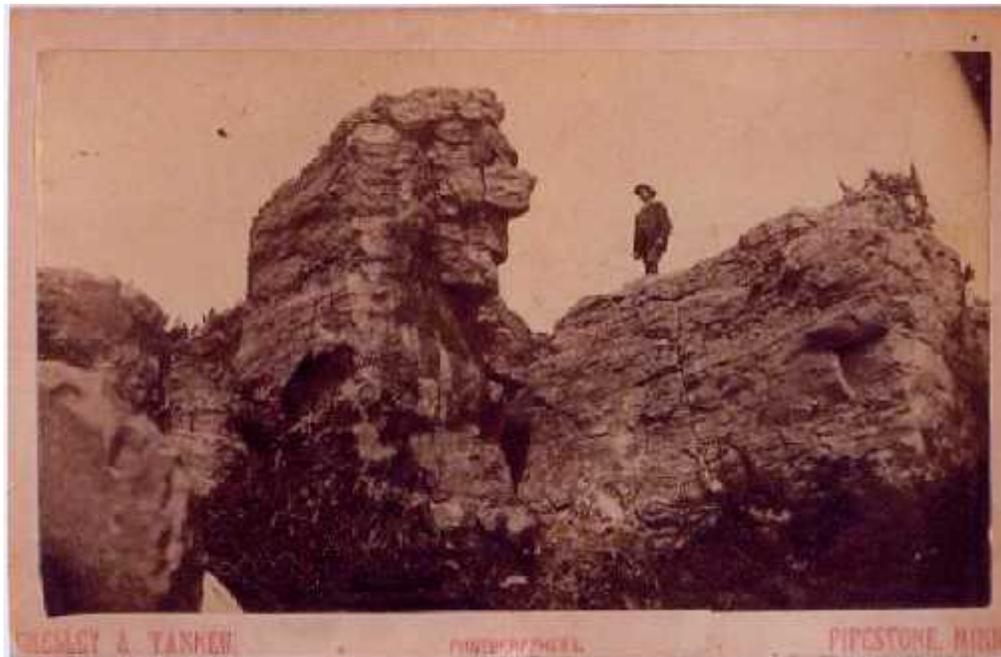


Figure 36a. The *Big Stone Face* at Pipestone National Monument, Pipestone, Minnesota. Pipestone or ‘Catlinite’ was mined for millennia at this site and the profile was considered profound and sacred by all the people and tribes who visited.

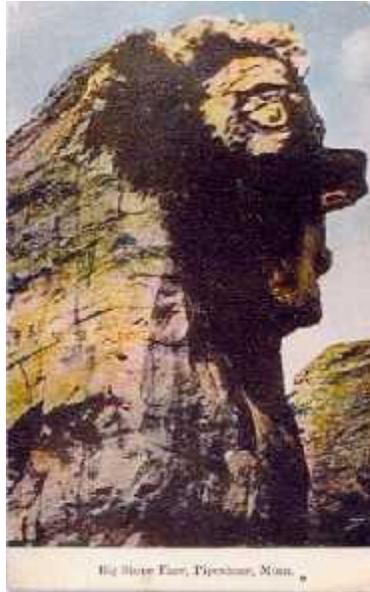


Figure 36b. Colored postcard image of the *Big Stone Face* at Pipestone, Minnesota.

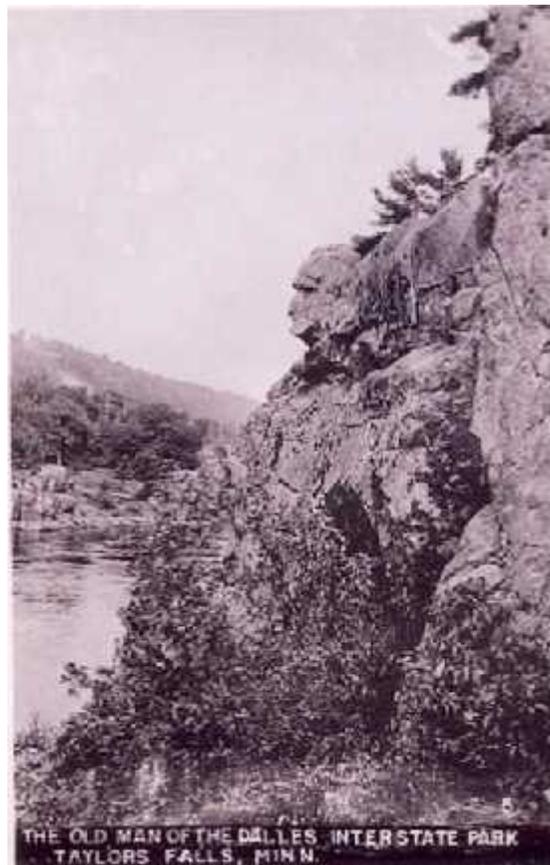


Figure 37. The *Old Man of the Dalles* (Dells) at Interstate Park on the Mississippi River, Taylor Falls, Minnesota.



Figure 38. Perhaps one of the most profound profile rocks is the forty-four feet high *Indian Head Sentinel on the Mississippi (River)* near Winona, Minnesota.

### *Summary*

The fate of many of the Manitou stones is not a kind story or legacy for future generations, one generally with an unhappy end or outcome whether large or small. The huge profile rocks are no different, another vestige of world and landscape that is now totally disengaged from the modern world and society. Perhaps it is best if they remain in obscurity and silence. In that way, they can hopefully escape vandalism, the graffiti artists spray paint and otherwise mindless, wholesale desecration. We would do well to try and reconnect with the zeitgeist they represented together with the basic ideals of Manitou and learn to celebrate the spirit of being a part of the world we live in, not apart from it.

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