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Rob Saffer

Woodstock, NY 12498

Dear Rob,

Thank you for guiding our tour of the stone pile formations on August 23, 2012. Per our conversation today, I wanted to recap my impression of these landscape features.

As we discussed during our tour, my first question is always: Are these formations the result of human hands or natural processes? The answer to that is clearly that these formations could only be the result of human construction.

Next, I usually ask about time period: Could these be the result of recent or historic construction, such as during the Civilian Conservation Corps depression-era programs, or farmers clearing fields? This would require further study of the historic records. However, it is obvious that no farmer would plow these steep hills interspersed with flat benches. Also, there is no obvious reason why the CCC would create these features on this landscape, and if they did there should be records of these activities.

If there is no record of historic projects that created these arrangement of stone piles, then the next step is to ask: Are these the result of prehistoric (meaning ancient Native American) processes? This is more difficult to answer. However, there are documented reports of such stone piles (not all as well-formed and carefully arranged as this example) all across the eastern U.S. Some Native Americans claim that arrangements of stone piles are aligned with astronomical alignments, and are therefore ceremonial or sacred. Others believe they were used to channel stampeding herds of deer into confined spaces to facilitate hunting. This step requires the most study, and the results need to be assessed within larger regional frameworks with consultation with Native American groups.

It is my opinion, that further study will yield some answers or speculative interpretations of these stone features and their arrangement on the landscape. Depending on the answers and interpretations, it is possible that the State Historic Preservation Office would want to comment on their eligibility for inclusion on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Also, I know that the Oneida Nation of Indians is undertaking a study of stone piles and are interested in their possible ceremonial significance.

The formations are certainly unique and are some of the most well-constructed ones that I have seen. While I am not an expert on stone piles, I think that most people would share my opinion that they are unique and worthy of further study.

Sincerely,

Nina M. Versaggi, PhD RPA  
Director