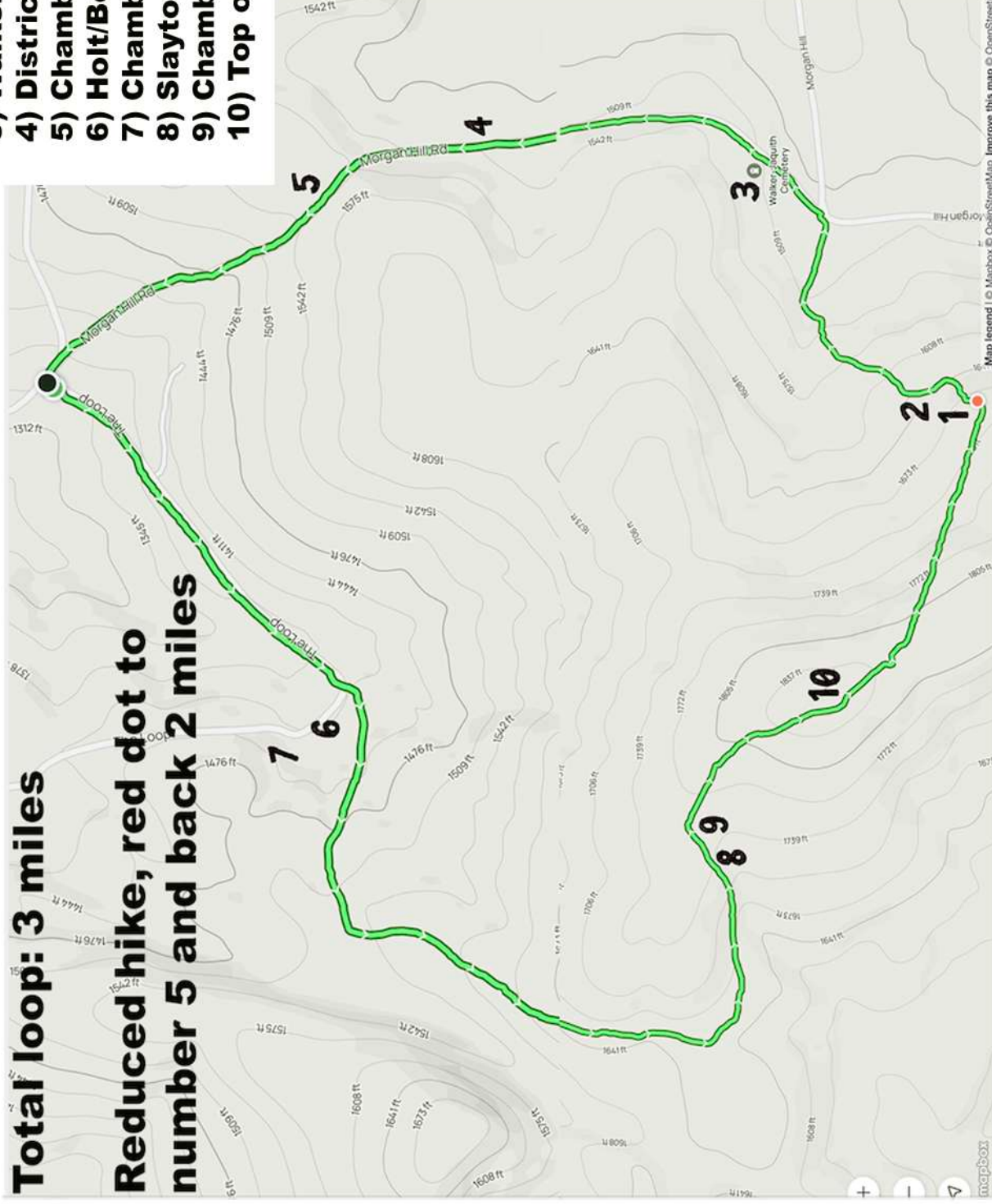


Slayton Hill Hike

Total loop: 3 miles

Reduced hike, red dot to number 5 and back 2 miles

- 1) Ralph House
- 2) Chamber Number One
- 3) Walker-Jaquith Cemetery
- 4) District 17 Schoolhouse
- 5) Chamber Number Two
- 6) Holt/Benjamin House
- 7) Chamber Number Three
- 8) Slayton Homesite
- 9) Chamber Number Four
- 10) Top of the World



This hike is on private property Location 6 to location 8, it is part of the Seabrook property and it is posted please ask for permission.

Otherwise you can reach the Slayton locations and Top of the World by climbing up the path near the # 2 stone chamber going straight uphill.

1) Ralph House

The property around the house you're looking at has a storied past. We call it the Ralph house because it was on the lands of the original settler Daniel Ralph 1747-1826 (sometimes spelled Rolfe) who came from Woodstock, Connecticut. From the *Valley of the Kedron*: "He carried his grain to Charlestown, N. H., to be ground. In the summer time he toted the bag on his back. In the winter he drew it on a small sled. He once shot a moose on Mt. Tom. That sounds decidedly apocryphal but all sorts of things could happen that long ago. He raised great quantities of wheat on that hill and during a scarcity of it in 1817, people came to him for wheat as far as one hundred miles away". According to the current owner this brick building was built in 1807. Records indicate there was a brickyard on the property, so it is probable that. Daniel lived in a log cabin when he settled in 1775 at the age of 28. He is buried in the Walker-Jaquith Cemetery.



All the land that we'll be hiking on today was part of the Apthorp tract, land confiscated from a Tory speculator during the Revolution.

Henry Willard Walker 1833-1920 lived here. Educated in the public schools and Green Mountain Institute. Early in life he began breeding of Merino sheep, then dairying. Had a state reputation for manufacturing maple sugar and syrup. President of Green Mountain Perkins Academy, and chairman of its executive committee for many years. His daughter Carrie Aurora Walker 1865-1943 married Ralph Jaquith, she lived in the Ralph house in 1940 when the *Valley of the Kedron* was written. Both are buried in the Walker-Jaquith Cemetery. Carrie was a principal of the Academy and a very accomplished musician.



Carrie Aurora Walker

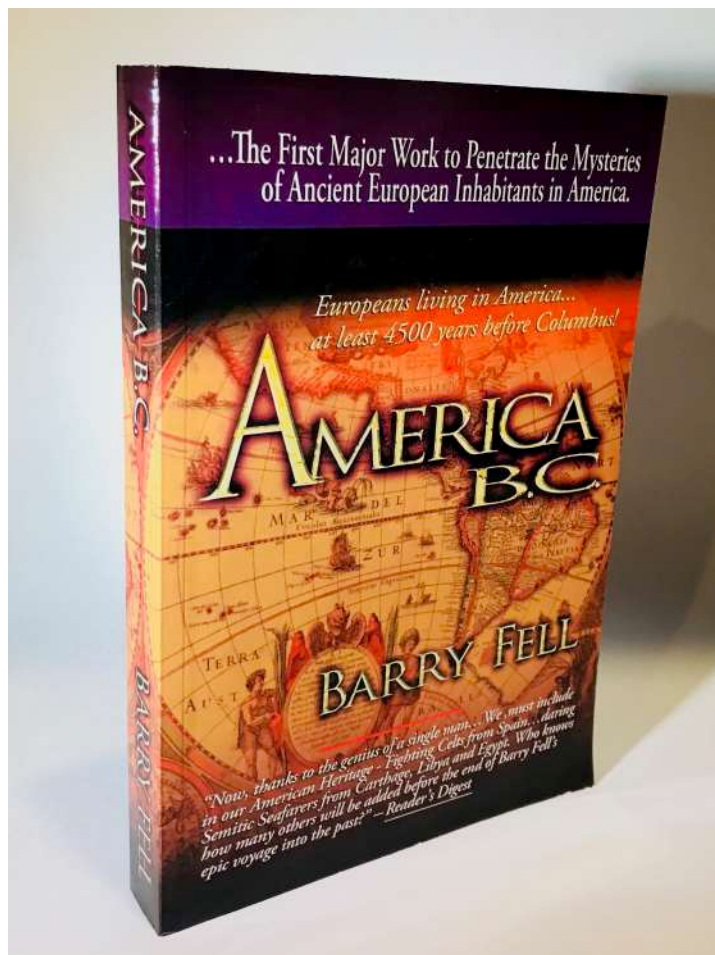
The Ralph farm seems to be incredibly productive, an orchard was planted early and we have reports that 600 barrels of apples were produced in one year. Another interesting fact on this family was that Daniel's grandson Galo Ralph excavated the South Chapel and laid its foundation.

2) Chamber One

alignment 170°

In the 1970s an amazing archaeological controversy was going on. Barry Fell, hit the world with an amazing proposition: ancient Celts, Phoenicians, and even Egyptians were living in New England over 2000 years ago. He had proof, he had discovered a number of their temples in South Woodstock itself.

Yes they had sailed up the Connecticut, the Ottauquechee, the Kedron and went up the brook by the



firehouse and at the top of the hill they built megalithic structures. His idea ignited the imagination of hundreds, in fact last Sunday when I went up to take a compass reading there were 5 cars and about 20 people checking out the Chamber on Calendar Hill. One day in 1977, Barry visited the chamber here by the Ralph house with local author and guide Howard Coffin who at the time was a cub reporter for the Rutland Herald. Barry read some of the inscriptions he could decipher and even showed Howard a Thunderbird or some kind of animal depiction on the ceiling with a flashlight. Can you see it?

This chamber is aligned at 170 °, almost due south. Which Barry says was crucial to their summer solstice festivals.

More to follow at Chamber Two

3) Walker/Jaquith Cemetery

It is unclear when the Walker-Jaquith cemetery was first created. Original settler Daniel Ralph was here in 1826. The oldest marked Slayton stone in the cemetery is Samuel Slayton, Jr. 1783-1785, His father Samuel Slayton was a first settler who lived from 1751-1830. He is buried here and I think it's possible his two year old son was moved to be with him.

There are 24 Slayton's, 17 Holts, 10 Willards, 8 Ralphs and 7 Jaquiths. Seems to me it should be called the Slayton-Holt cemetery. But Jane Soule is on the board of the Academy and she is related to the Jaquiths, so I'm not going to make an issue of it.

Abraham (1756 - 1828 and Isaac Kendall (1763 - 1833) are here. And Ebenezer Bridge who fought in the Revolution, and Dr. Stephen Drew, (? - 1842) the village's first doctor who lived in the 1798 house on the hill near the South Woodstock store.

The ancestors of the Jaquiths were French Huguenots who first fled France sometime before 1628. They became a well known, highly respected family of patriots; having mustered from Billerica to join the minutemen at Concord in 1775.

One of the most interesting people buried here is Silas Burdoo (1826-1900), an African -American man who fought in the Civil War, He was in the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, the famed regiment that was immortalized in the movie *Glory*. When I think of Silas Burdoo, I think Denzel Washington. He was 37 when he enlisted. His uncle, from Lexington Mass. fought in the Revolution and moved to Reading at war's end. Silas was a servant who lived with the Ralph-Walker family. If you recall from our Randall Road hike his brother Philip is buried in the Randall Cemetery. Amazingly they have a genealogy of Silas going back to his great-grandfather who was born in Africa around 1689, and married and lived in Medford, Mass by 1704.



An interesting piece from Mary Canfield in the *Valley of the Kedron*

"The tomb-stone man of this yard had his own ideas how to express the fact that a woman had been married twice. Usually they are called Consorts and Relicts, which always sounds like some sort of gadget or appendage, but in this yard, Mrs. Desire Bugbee, former wife of Joshua Slayton, is the way it is done and this dignified form is on several stones, for the widows always remarried in those days".

4) Schoolhouse #17

District 17 was the Slayton-Ralph neighborhood. Elias Smith in his book *The Life, Conversion, Preaching, Travels and Sufferings of Elias Smith* tells about teaching there in the winter of 1788. An excerpt from his book:

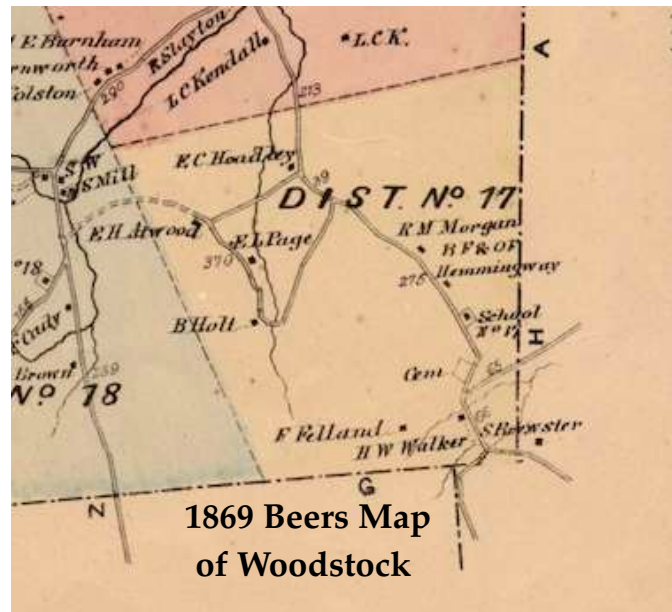
"In the spring of 1783, my father sold what property he had in Lyme, (Connecticut) intending to purchase land in Woodstock. In April he set out for Vermont, taking my oldest brother with him. He purchased one hundred acres of land in the south part of Woodstock, made what preparation he could for the convenience of his family, and leaving my brother, returned home in June, to make ready to carry his family there before winter. Some time in the month of August of that year, we commenced the journey of one hundred and eighty miles, which we performed in thirteen days.

The thought of going on the journey was peculiarly pleasing to me, as I had, from my first remembrance, a constant desire to see more of the world than was in sight of my father's house."

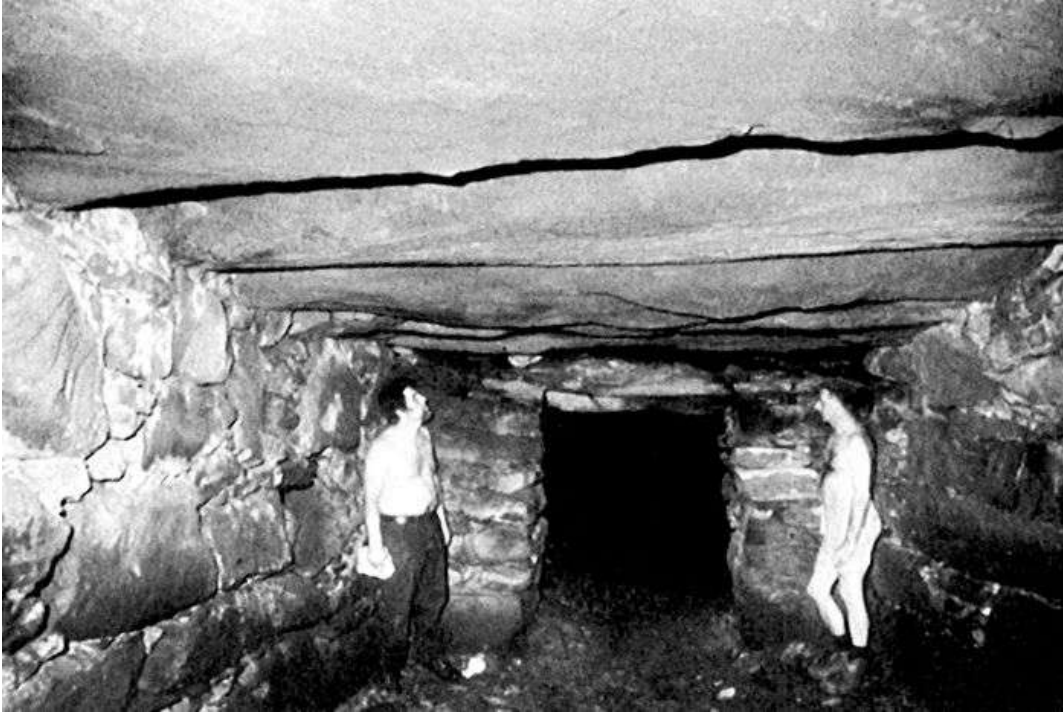
I hope we can uncover information on where Elias lived, because the story of his great disappointment in finding his father's shack is a story in itself. Basically he turned around, ran down the hill and said he was going back to Connecticut. Perhaps a future history hike!

Anyhow, back to the District #17 Schoolhouse: The school was held in a new dwelling house which was in quite an unfinished state, the windows had oiled paper to give light which was largely darkness. In 1797 John Simonds was the teacher and he must have been fairly well equipped and have had some vision of education for he assisted James Slayton in attempting to create a library of the South Parish. Not getting enough response from people in the neighborhood, James and John went down to South Woodstock village and knocked on doors until he found enough people who cared about books and were willing to contribute. In January 1797 they succeeded and organized the Woodstock Social Library. James was the first Secretary.

A brick schoolhouse was built in 1827. Mrs. Canfield says that by 1940 it was crumbling into ruin. Seems true because we can't seem to find any evidence of it today.



5) Chamber Two: Calendar II or Moon's Arc alignment 130°



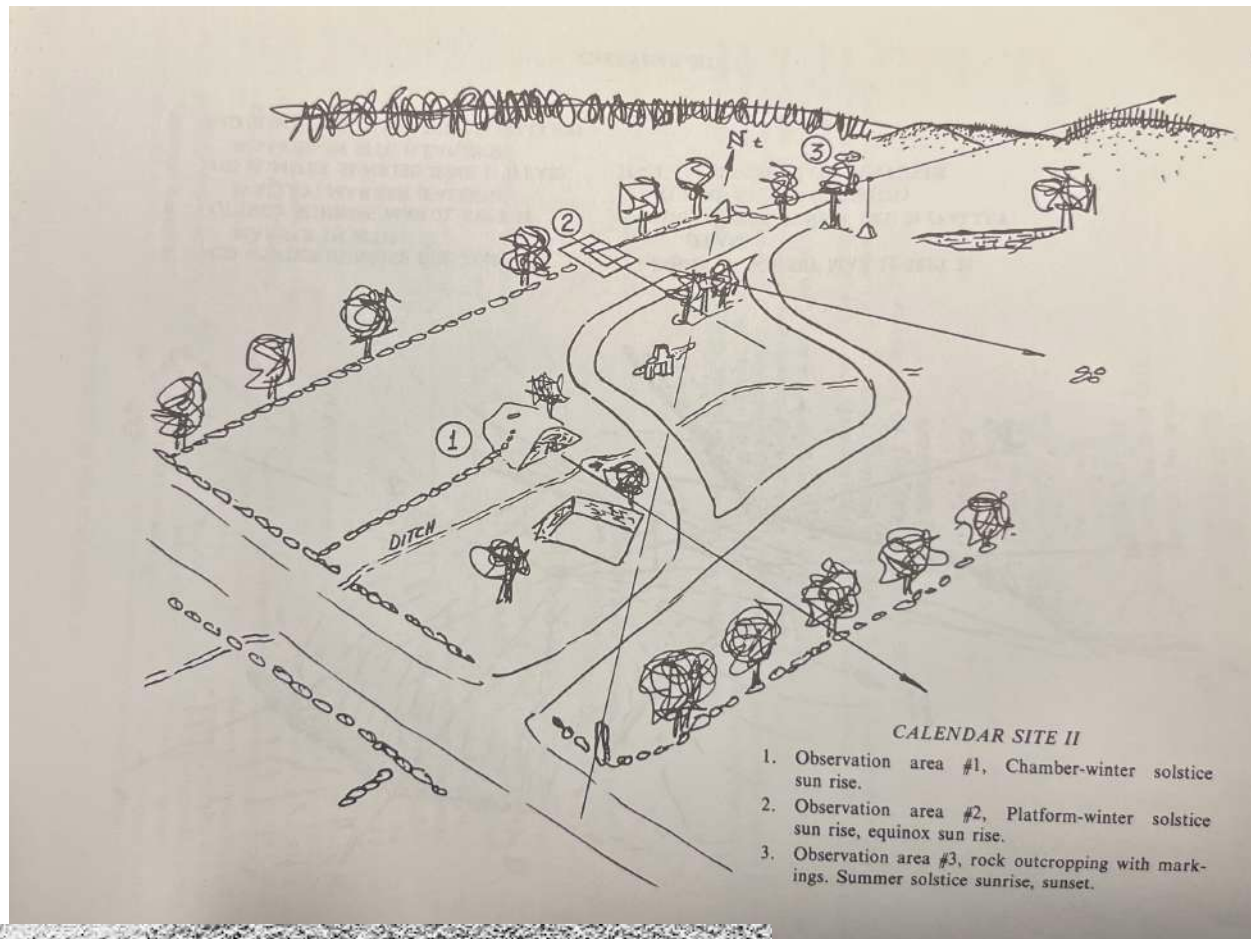
Before we get going on the most famous stone chamber in America, a few words about the first English settler on the land before you. His name was David Slayton, born in 1740 in Brookfield, Massachusetts. He had 11 children and many of them settled around these hills. His father was born in Braintree, Mass. on the coast and of good Puritan stock. Like his children, he ultimately moved west and died in Worcester County. He was buried back in Brookfield, Mass. We'll return to the Slaytons when we climb up the hill to the southwest.



Ogam, or Ogham, is an ancient Celtic alphabet which Professor Fell could read. In his book, *America, B.C.* he interprets a myriad of inscriptions. One of which he translated as, "How to make a baby". It's kind of amazing how he found so many to be of a sexual nature.

Prof. Fell found other structures near Calendar II: a

wedding alter with two recessed butt depressions for the bride and groom. He also pointed out that on the winter solstice, when the sun rises, it lights up the inside of the chamber. OK, I'll believe that, but why is it aligned 40° off the alignment of Chamber 1? Were the Celts sloppy or did exact alignment really not matter?



The professor found several carvings of animals near Calendar II: on a hill a mile away there were rocks that were carved like a whale or a dolphin. In another spot a trout or salmon, and then a turtle, that if you look from the other side resembles a skull.

I took the picture on the right after a local cheesemaker told me about this "Indian Stone" on a side road in nearby Cavendish. So not Celtic, but Native American. You can make your own decision, but I am positive that that stone, hauled up on the top of a bunch of smaller stones, was formerly in the ground with only the cut portion showing. In this case it appears that the farmer plowed in the same direction almost all the time. The lines are pretty parallel.



OGHAM ALPHABET

+	⌒	≡	≡	≡
A	O	U	E	I
└	┐	≡	≡	≡
B	L	F	S	N
└	┐	≡	≡	≡
H	D	T	C	Q
+	⌒	≡	≡	≡
M	G	NG	Z	R

Other stones I have seen have slashes coming in at different angles. Surprisingly like the table on the left. I wish Barry was around to interpret it. Actually maybe he did. Hah, I just read in *Ancient Vermont* that it was well-known and called the Blanchard Stone!

And now this from [Academia.edu](https://www.academia.edu):

According to Barry Fell, the Blanchard Stone, discovered in Vermont, is "a prayer for rain inscribed in a form of Gaelic used by Iberian Celts."

Two more chambers to go.

6) Benjamin / Holt House

Sometimes knowing who lived where when in early Woodstock is tough to figure out. We know this for sure: a Benjamin lived here according to the 1832 map. Thirty-seven years later the Holts were there. See the 1869 Beers map.

William Benjamin and two sons were in the Revolution, enlisting at Ashburnham, Mass. They settled in Woodstock directly after the War. It's reasonable to expect they settled here on the Loop. Jonathan, William's son, bought his farm in 1784. This farm too was in the Apthorp tract of confiscated land. Apthorp tract.

Dinah Cram Benjamin 1737 -1821 age 83 married Thomas Parke Rood 1732 - 1795, What relation to William Benjamin, Sr. is not clear. But Mr. And Mrs. Rood were some of the oldest people who travelled up to South Woodstock. Both are buried in the Walker-Jaquith cemetery.

And wouldn't you know it, they're related to Mary McCuaig. Lemuel Benjamin 1784 - 1853 was born in South Woodstock, and married Beulah Fullerton! The Benjamin/Holt farm was later owned by the Snells. The following story was collected by Mary Canfield in the *Valley of the Kedron*:

In King George II in 1767 made a grant to Levi Willard and Associates, lands embracing these tracts. Then Willard sold much of this section to Charles Apthorp. There were four ranges of lots each consisting of one hundred acres and each numbered from east to west. In 1782 Daniel Davis of Harvard, Mass., sold some of this land to Jacob Holt. Joshua Holt sold to Uriah Holt and then Uriah and his wife Sarah sold to Jacob and Jacob sold to Nathan and he to Jacob Jr. It was the year 1809. All of these Holts lived in Ashburnham, Mass., and they certainly had a grand time selling to each other. Some of them are now living on this confiscated land. In 1817 Nathan and Oliver Holt sold the farm "our father formerly owned" to Jacob Jr. The next year Jacob Jr. and Nathan sell to William Bridge who had married their sister Susan.

This led up to the Snell purchase. Roy Snell is around today and was a previous member of the Academy Board.



7) Chamber Three

alignment 140°

So after the spread of the Barry Fell's migration theory, a backlash occurred. Vermont's first State Archaeologist became a prominent skeptic. Writing a major study pushing her theory that these chambers, of which there are 55 in Vermont still standing, were root cellars. Mainly for storing turnips, pumpkins and potatoes for sheep, pigs and horses over the severe northern winters. Root cellars like ours are found Maine, to Kentucky to Michigan. Indeed, there is much in the historical record that stresses the importance of building a food storage building ahead of your primary housing.

If they were root cellars, rather than Celt temples, why did the early Vermonters stop building them? One theory is that silos came into popular use, allowing corn and other silage to be used for feed. Also the spread of iceboxes. That permitted people to refrigerate indoors. The icebox was invented by an American farmer and cabinetmaker named Thomas Moore in 1802!

See you at our last chamber.



8) Slayton Home site

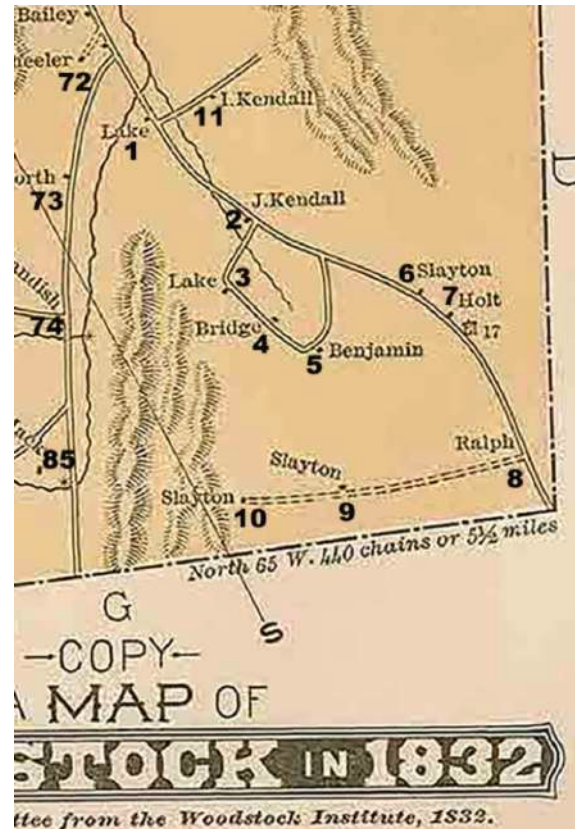
In the accompanying 1832 map, you can see two Slayton homes on the rough road that leads down to the Ralph farm. We believe these were the brothers Joshua Slayton (1744 - 1786) and Samuel Slayton (1751- 1830) . Cellar holes and a fine spring tell where these houses stood said Mary Canfield in 1940. Joshua Slayton settled here in 1780, Samuel followed in 1782. Joshua's stay on Slayton Hill was brief, he died four years later. His wife Desire carried on the farm for a long time after.

So the patriarch of this family was Thomas Slayton (1709-1778) he had eight children including David, Joshua and Samuel who moved to South Woodstock. He lived in Brookfield, in Worcester County, Massachusetts and though most of children moved to South Woodstock, they are almost all buried back in the Evergreen Cemetery in East Brookfield. David, Joshua and Samuel were the third, fourth and fifth sons of Thomas, it can be assumed that at least one of the two older brothers took over the farm in Brookfield

We have this about Samuel: "For many years he made regular trips to Boston with a team, taking down his cheese, butter, poultry and other products of his farm and bringing back salt, groceries and things needed by his family. The records tell us that he was peaceable, industrious and independent. Ten children were born to him and his wife. It was a musical family. They played the fife, clarinet, drum and violin, and they were leaders in all the social activities of the region".

Samuel's grandson Truman Slayton was considered the best farmer in South Woodstock: "He carried off most of the prizes given at the Agricultural gatherings. His farm was called the best managed one in Windsor County". I'd like to know where that farm was... where up high here near the Top of the World?

The short-lived Joshua only had three children, one of which was James who organized the library. The oldest brother David of Calendar Hill fame had 11:



Amasa Slayton 1761-1833	Patricia Slayton 1762	Percy Slayton 1763-1765	David Slayton Jr 1764-1838	Olive Slayton 1765 -1802.
Elias Slayton 1768-1814	Daniel Slayton 1769-1804	Huldah Slayton 1771-1801	Persis Percy Slayton 1772	
Olive Slayton 1774	Roswell Slayton 1776-1869			

The list of Slayton's in early Woodstock history is lengthy. It seems that many of them picked up and headed west in the Great Vermont Migration of the 1830-50s. Many of them settled in Northern New York and Michigan. Could they have been Millerites? Members of a religious cult we'll turn to shortly? Only two male Slayton's were buried in the Walker-Jaquith cemetery after 1850.

A more probable reason was economic in nature. This from *Migration from Vermont* by Sarah Rooker:

What pushed so many west? In 1811 William Jarvis introduced Merino sheep into Vermont, leading to a fairly rapid change in farming practices: Many farms were consolidated as it became more profitable to raise sheep on a larger scale. By 1837 there were over one million sheep in Vermont providing wool to the large textile mills in Massachusetts and over 100 smaller mills in Vermont. Windsor County was one of four in the state that counted 200 sheep per square mile. From 1829 to 1835, the average flock size throughout New Hampshire was 500-1,000 head. Walpole, N.H., recorded 20,000 sheep..

The booming wool industry created disparities in wealth as the demand for larger acreage increased land prices. Not everyone could afford a farm and the 1830s saw many young would-be northern New England farmers heading west. "Beware of the 'western fever' and above all, sell not your farms to your rich neighbors for sheep pastures," warned Windsor's newspaper, the Green Mountaineer, in 1834. While some Vermont & New Hampshire farmers prospered, the sheep and wool boom was short-lived and its longer-term consequences were damaging. Environmental degradation, primarily deforestation, and the collapse of the local industry in the 1840s as a result of cheaper western wool and the end of the tariff, both accelerated westward migration from the region.

Gold also drew Vermonters to the West. By 1850, 11,000 (out of a population of 314,000) Vermonters had reached California, many bound for the gold mines. In addition to searching for gold, they kept stores, ran hotels, shipped freight, and found other types of work that were often more profitable than mining. Some of them made good money, some of them failed miserably, some died out west, and a few of them stayed in California. But most of these men returned to Vermont.

9) Chamber Four alignment ____°

We have to take a compass measurement here..

Professor Fell was not an archaeologist, he was actually a distinguished marine biologist, so much so that Harvard recruited him from New Zealand for their zoology department. His specialty was in starfish and sea urchins. His interest in inscriptions began early in his career with a study of Polynesian petroglyphs published in 1940, but his most famous work came much later, starting in 1976 with his publication of *America B.C.* There are several books on both sides of the Chamber controversy. Notably *Ancient Vermont* by the professor's ally Warren Cook that details a conference on the matter held at Castleton in 1977.

For a great overview do the web search 'Howard Coffin Barry Fell' and you will find an excellent one hour video of his talk before the Bridgewater Historical Society.



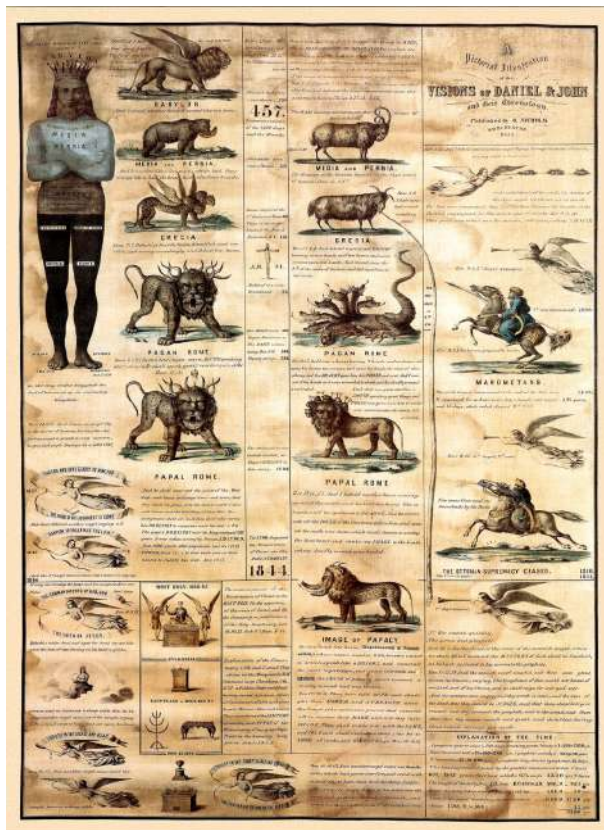
10) Top of the World

If you had been here on October 22nd, 1844, you would have been surrounded by dozens of local people dressed in their ascension robes waiting to go up to heaven.

From the *Valley of the Kedron*:

"This story of Religious movements in the South Parish should have a brief mention of the Millerites who held meetings in the 1840's. Part of them took place in the Chapel where they raved and shouted and threatened. They fairly filled the place with the fumes of their Hell. Outdoor meetings were held on the beautiful hill south of Mr. Cullen B. Snell's farm [the Benjamin/Holt farm] where some of the Slaytons lived. The disciples put on their ascension robes, one man went crazy and the Town appointed a guardian for him. A good many foolish things took place. After a time they found that they had not gone to Heaven but must still labor on the earth, and the madness passed."

The Millerites were the followers of the teachings of William Miller, who in 1831 first shared publicly his belief that the Second Advent of Jesus Christ would occur in roughly the year 1843–1844. Miller was a prosperous farmer, a Baptist lay preacher, and student of the Bible living in northeastern New York. He spent years of intensive study of symbolic meaning of the prophecies of Daniel. Miller became convinced that the 2,300-day period started in 457 BC with the decree to rebuild Jerusalem by Artaxerxes I of Persia. Simple calculation then indicated that this period would end about 1843.



In 1832, Miller submitted a series of sixteen articles to the Vermont Telegraph—a Baptist paper. He immediately got a response. "I began to be flooded with letters of inquiry respecting my views, and visitors flocked to converse with me on the subject." Within a few years the movement was being covered in many northeastern newspapers and periodicals. In addition to the Signs of the Times based in Boston, Millerite papers were published in numerous cities including New York City, Philadelphia, Rochester, Cleveland, and Montreal, Quebec. Ultimately there were 48 Millerite periodicals fanning the flames. Despite the urging of his supporters, Miller never personally set an exact date for the expected Second Advent. However, in response to their urgings he did narrow the time-period to sometime in the year 1843, stating: "My principles in brief, are, that Jesus

Christ will come again to this earth, cleanse, purify, and take possession of the same, with all the saints, sometime between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844”.

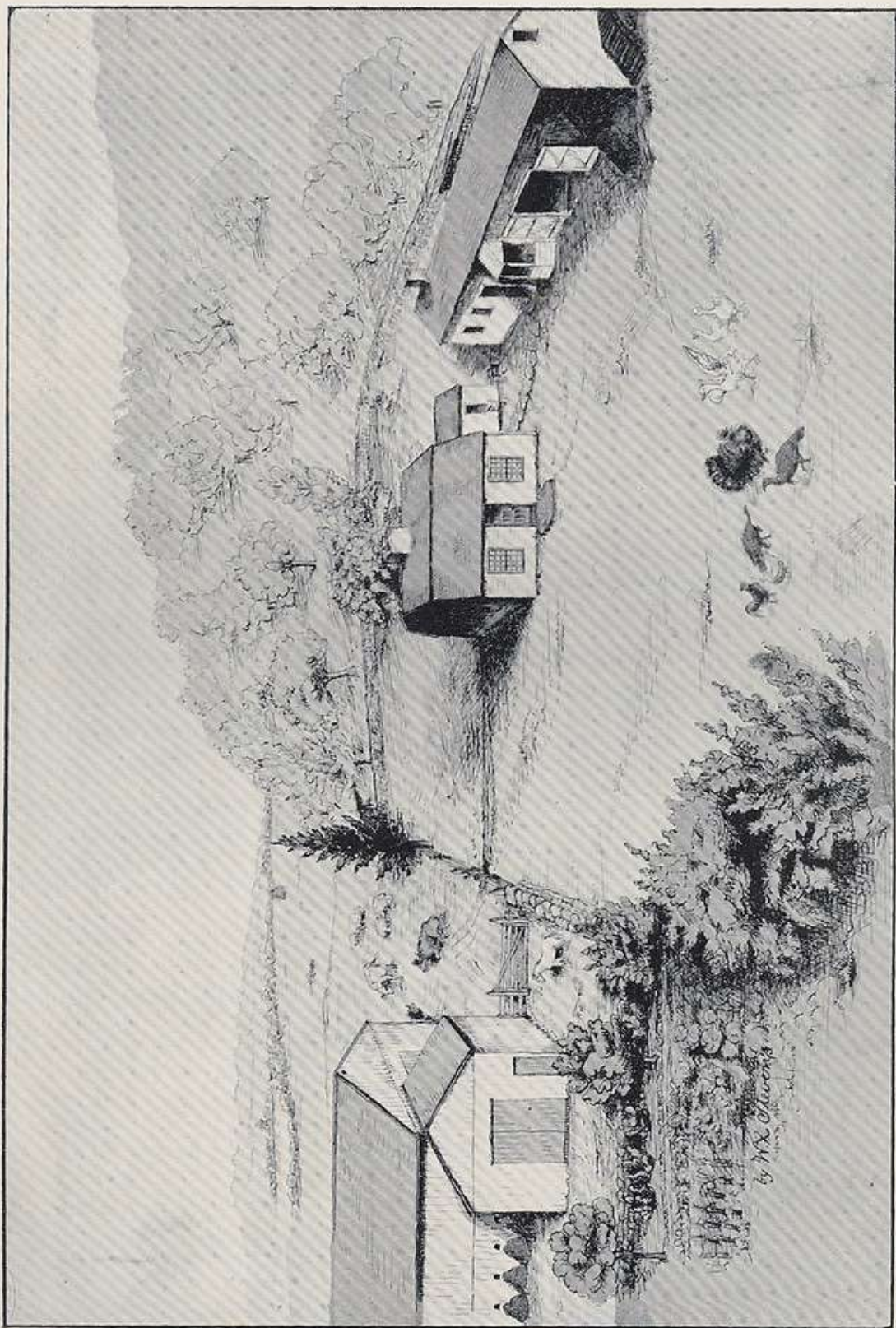
Subsequently a preacher at a camp meeting in Exeter, NH surprised the Millerite leaders by coming up with a new date: October 22nd, 1844. When this day ended like any other, the Millerites were shocked and disillusioned. Henry Emmons, a Millerite, later wrote,

I waited all Tuesday [October 22] and dear Jesus did not come;—I waited all the forenoon of Wednesday, and was well in body as I ever was, but after 12 o'clock I began to feel faint, and before dark I needed someone to help me up to my chamber, as my natural strength was leaving me very fast, and I lay prostrate for 2 days without any pain—sick with disappointment.

The Millerites had to deal with their own shattered expectations, as well as considerable criticism and even violence from the public. Many followers had given up their possessions in expectation of Christ's return. A Millerite church was burned in Ithaca, New York, and two were vandalized in Dansville and Scottsville. In Loraine, Illinois, a mob attacked the Millerite congregation with clubs and knives, while a group in Toronto was tarred and feathered.

Can you imagine the scene on that cold October evening when the skies darkened, the believers looked at each other, turned and walked down silently from the Top of the World?





BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF SLAYTON HOMESTEAD, EAST BROOKFIELD, MASS.

This house was built by the second Thomas about 1770. He had lived in same place since 1748. The large barn built by Isaac Slayton 1825. House torn down 1860. Sketched from memory by William X. Stevens; suggestions by Isaac S. Lyon.