

Mysteries in Stone: A Bigger Picture

By Glenn Kreisberg

Did ancient megalithic construction practices influence the cultural development of northeast Native American civilization thousands of years ago?

I believe evidence exists to support the theory an ancient cultural group used the terrain and landscape of the Catskill and Shawangunk Mountains, in upstate New York, to carry out astronomical observations and preserved the information by manipulating the natural terrain to create alignments between landscape features and manmade monuments. Some of the alignments are configured over distances of up to nearly 20 miles. If this could be documented I believe it would reshape our understanding and concept of what ancient (prehistoric) man knew and was capable of accomplishing.

The evidence exists at sites that consists of different and various elements such as cairn fields, dry stone walls, large set boulders, horizon hills, etc. which combine to create landscape constructions which configure and align with the rising and setting sun on specific dates of the year. I believe a correlation can be made between site locations, alignments of various naturals and manmade features such as cairn fields, dry stone walls, set boulders and other horizon features, natural or manmade, that indicate where the sun rises and sets on the shortest and longest days of the year.

In this article we'll travel into the backwoods of upstate New York looking at mysterious sites with constructions made of stone. No one claims to know for certain the story behind many of these unknown lithic structures. Having no official classification in history or prehistory these sites fall between the cracks of archaeology and cultural anthropology ending up as curiosities that baffle the experts and confound our attempts to provide a plausible explanation.

First we'll visit a cairn site deep in the Catskill Mountains of upstate New York. Cairns are typically considered mounds or piles made of stones that show some purpose and intention in their location and design. Many times these piles are left as markers to delineate a trail or route. Another common belief, backed up by some documentation, is that they mark or memorialize the location of an important event such as the death of a notable figure, the site of a critical battle or even as markers for tribal graves or sacred sites.

Over the years many hundreds if not thousands of these site have been located in northeast America, though many are now quickly vanishing due to spreading development and lack of protection. And, over the years various theories and assumptions have been offered up to explain the origins of these curious and mysterious constructions. These include: Land surveying, subdivision and property boundary markers, land clearing for agricultural activity such as planting and grazing as well as farm beautification. While some of these theories can be applied to some of these sites and locations, no blanket theory explains all of them. And many such lithic sites fall outside any theory at all.

In Putnam County New York hundreds of megalithic stone chambers have been documented. Many have been built and configured to align with the winter solstice sunrise, which is the sunrise on the shortest day of the year. In another instance: From the end of Long Island through

Connecticut, across the Hudson Valley and through the Catskill Mountains, an alignment of stone constructions has been discovered which aligns with the setting sun on the summer solstice; the longest day of the year. And, in yet another instance; two large boulders (20+ tons each) located approximately 18.5 miles apart, yet with line of site to each other, align to create both a winter solstice sunrise, summer solstice sunset alignment from clear ridge tops with east/west views.

Is it possible parts of the northeast United State were and are home to one of the largest concentrations of ancient astronomically aligned stone structures to be found anywhere? This is a question worth exploring. Regions of the northeast including New York's Catskill Mountains and Hudson Valley may be one of the richest archaeo-astronomical complex areas in the United States, with still-functioning solstice and equinox sunrise and sunset alignments. Researchers have documented hundreds of enigmatic stone structures and complexes still standing across the region.

This article will hopefully shed some light on the purpose and people behind these mysterious stone structures, in an effort to gain some insight into their lives and motivations.

We begin our journey by traveling up to the head of Spruceton Valley in Westkill, New York.

Spruceton Valley is located in a remote region of the Catskill Park Preserve, at the heart of nearly a million acres of protected state lands. Heading into Spruceton Valley is like traveling back in time. You can practically feel the pace of time slow down as you head deeper down the valley road. Old farms and country cottages eventually give way to wooded mountain sides, forested slopes and a narrow dirt road leading to the trail head.

We follow a mountain stream, the headwater of the Schoharie Creek, along a state hiking trail until we reach the cairn field not far off the path to the north. Once we reach the cairns we go into full investigation mode, measuring, plotting, photographing, sketching and documenting the location and features of this particular site.

This is a spectacular assembly of beautifully formed, circular stone platform cairns. Some are as tall as 3 meters. Other show signs of having been constructed with small chambers or cysts built into their interiors. All have an esthetic quality and design form displaying purposeful intention. These are not just piles of stone thrown together.



Circular platform cairn



Circular "cyst" cairn

Nearby is a stone wall which encloses most of the cairns. In all about two dozen large cairns are present along with many more smaller piles of stone gathered and placed onto small boulders or bedrock outcrops.

Sites like this were first seriously studied by the team of James Mavor Jr. and Byron Dix, two pioneers in the scientific identification and classification of lithic sites in New England. Dix was an optical engineer and Mavor a marine engineer and naval architect from MIT who worked at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute. Mavor was instrumental in designing the ALVIN submersible research vehicle. Mavor also directed the undersea archaeological surveys of Minoan ruins off Santorini in the Greek Isles in the late 1960's.

A Minoan City, Found After 3,400 Years Is Linked to Atlantis

By JOHN H. FENTON
Special to The New York Times
 BOSTON, July 18—The discovery of an entire Minoan city buried by a volcanic eruption in 1500 B.C. on the Greek island of Thera was described today by two members of an expedition that made the find earlier in the year.

James W. Mavor Jr. of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Massachusetts, said he was inspired that the discovery confirmed a theory that Thera was part of the lost continent of Atlantis. He said Plato described the sinking of an island into the Aegean Sea in a day and a night, as happened to the center of Thera.

The island is situated near the sea. It is a volcanic island which last erupted in 1866.

Mrs. Emily Vermeade, a research fellow at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and a professor of art and Greek at Wellesley College, said that the digging so far indicated that the settlement had been a wealthy Minoan city.

Greek authorities hope to create an underground museum, leaving the treasures of the community in their places, said Professor Vermeade.

Above ground, near the modern seaside village of Akrotiri, are vineyards that will be preserved, she said.

Wine and oil jars uncovered during the excavating may have survived an earthquake in 1680 B.C., Mr. Mavor believes site on Greek Isles may have been part of Atlantis.

May and June. Samples of the wine and oil are undergoing scientific testing.

Mr. Mavor and Professor Vermeade said they were excavating during a six-week period in

Continued on Page 4, Column 2

City Buried 3,400 Years Ago Linked to Atlantis

Continued From Page 1, Col. 4

The skeletons of domestic animals, such as sheep, goats and pigs, were found in the absence of human skeletons, a local museum on the island said. The skeletons of gold indicate that the inhabitants had some wealth.

A news conference to report some of the findings was held in the city of Boston.

The site of the digging covered more than half a square mile, said the expedition leader, Mr. Mavor, who organized the discovery in 1967.

Mr. Mavor, who organized the discovery in 1967, said the site was excavated during a six-week period in

Continued on Page 4, Column 2

The Atlantic Mystery

Just where the "continent" of Atlantis was located has long been a mystery. It was first mentioned by Plato, who said it was a real island in the Atlantic Ocean. He said he agreed with Plato's account of the island's location. He said he agreed with Plato's account of the island's location. He said he agreed with Plato's account of the island's location.

An article featuring James Mavor Jr. appeared in the New York Times July 19th 1967

Manitou The Sacred Landscape of New England's Native Civilization, the book they coauthored in 1989, went a long way towards proving the northeastern Native Americans built with stone and that in many instances the purpose of their constructions was to determine, though marking astronomical observation, the timing of celestial motions, lunar, solar and stellar, creating calendar sites that tracked the cycles of nature, both long and short.

So, if this was a tradition carried to the Spruceton Valley site deep in the Catskill Mountains, what would be the evidence proving this site is configured to align with a solstice sunrise or

sunset?

Such an alignment would seem to put this geographic area in good company with many other sacred sites that have markers aligned with the yearly solstices, including New Grange in Ireland, Uaxactun in Guatemala, Palenque in Mexico, and the Temple at Karnak in Egypt.

When we first visited this cairn field and stone wall we took note of their locations plotting the GPS coordinates on a project map which included similar site under researched. Many of the sites are located along a path that leads to the setting sun on the solstices. In the northeast US the angle of that path is approximately 123 degrees southeast for the winter solstice sunrise and 303 degrees northwest for the summer solstice sunset. Both angles are based on true north and form a 180 degree straight line from southeast to northwest. Standing along this line, with an unobstructed view to the horizon, one would see the sun rising on the southeast horizon on the shortest day of the year, the winter solstice and six months later, if you turned around 180 degrees, you would see the sun setting at that point on the horizon, on the longest day of the year, the summer solstice.

All this begs the question: Would constructions aligned with the solstice or equinox Sun remain true, that is still stay in alignment, after hundreds, thousands or even tens of thousands of years? The answer is they would as has been proven at many locations, by observers for centuries, from the Mayan Sun Pyramid of Kukulcan at Chichen Itza to the temples of Egypt and Angkor Wat in Cambodia. This is because, while the sun is observed to precess backwards through the constellations approximately 1 degree every 72 years, due to the precession of the equinox (a 25,700 + yr cycle) this is only relative to the stars in the sky and not the sun's positions on the horizon, which would remain nearly constant over very long periods of time. Over 5000 years, there would be a negligible change to the naked eye, due to precession of the equinoxes and even less due to the obliquity of the ecliptic, an even longer and subtler cycle lasting millions of years.

Given what we know of other cultures that built in stone and aligned their monuments to the solstice horizon, is it possible some of the cultural beliefs and influences of these civilizations, the Egyptian, the Celts and others, were exported worldwide during the time when those societies were at their high point, several thousand years back? Were their ideas and practices visited upon North American shores in remote times? Did certain cultural beliefs and ideas diffuse across the globe and take hold among early humans? Or perhaps different groups developed these cultural ideas and practices separately and in isolation from one another, with little or no contact. Between diffusion and isolation the evidence supporting diffusion appears to be mounting, helping account for continuity present among certain common elements in many ancient myths and legends as well as flora and fauna.

So, if there is a solstice alignment to be discovered at the Spruceton Valley cairn site we should be able to document the event by viewing a winter solstice sunrise or summer solstice sunset from the location. So, we planned to be up in Spruceton Valley around December 21st to witness the sunrise on the solstice and confirm or dispute whether such an alignment exists or not.

But first we have to determine what elements in the construction and configuration of the cairn field and stone wall could potentially create a solstice alignment. We break out our compasses

and begin to check out the angle between aligned rows of cairns and the lengths of stone walls, looking for angles that match that of the path to the solstice sun setting on the horizon.

Having determined the rows of cairns and stone walls in Spruceton Valley do appear to have angles aligned with the winter solstice sunrise, we arrive before dawn on the 24th of Dec, while the sun is at its winter stand still, to see if these elements of the cairn complex are aligned to this celestial event. Again, in the northeast US the angle of that path is approximately 123 degrees southeast for the winter solstice sunrise and 303 degrees northwest for the summer solstice sunset.

Using the length of wall, running southeast, to sight our compass and cameras, we wait in the dark for the first rays of light to begin to streak the night skies darkness. As the approaching early sun's rays start to lighten the sky we're hoping when the sun's disc will appear on the southeast horizon, in a gap up the valley, between the ridgeline of two looming mountains to the south and north...where the stone wall points. If as the sun appears at that spot and the stone wall is pointing directly at that spot as well, we'll have confirmed this alignment.

And it happens: We see that the Spruceton Valley cairn complex has elements, including the stone wall and a straight row of large, well formed cairns, which align with the winter solstice sunrise. It would appear one of the purposes of the site was to record and preserve a celestial event that was being observed by those who constructed and used the site. But that doesn't answer the question of who built them or when. And, with no artifacts associated with the location having been discovered or identified, clues to who is responsible or insight into when they were built is extremely difficult to discern. But I can't help think, perhaps, Mavor and Dix would favor the pre-Columbian local native population of the area, as the most likely candidates responsible for constructing this type of site.

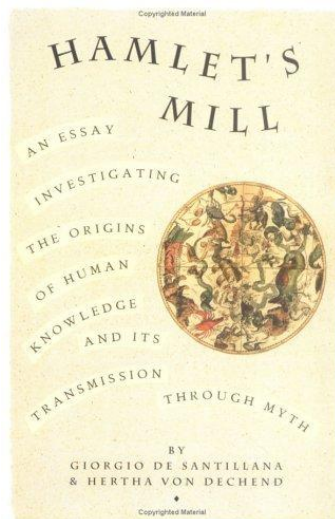
But, now knowing what the site was used for, perhaps more telling than whom and when, is why?

Searching for an answer we must ask; why should ancient cultures be so preoccupied with keeping track of the movements in the heavens?

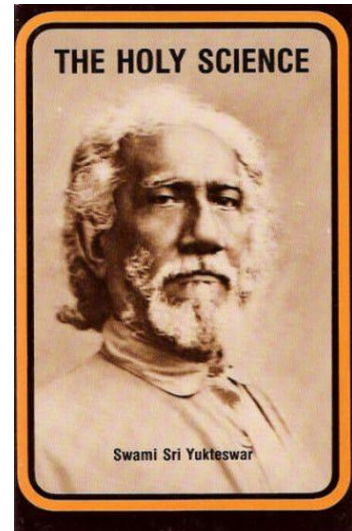
Knowing the cycles of nature, of course, was the key to predicting the seasonal changes. Finding ways to keep track of astronomical observations has probably been the single biggest influence on the development of math and science as well as myth, beginning for mankind in preliterate times.

In the book *Hamlet's Mill: An Essay Investigating the Origins of Human Knowledge and its Transmission Through Myth*, published in 1969, Giorgio De Santalino and Hertha Von Dechend, both professors of history at MIT, raise the thesis that the single biggest preoccupation of most ancient cultures, was the tracking of the precession of the equinox. It's connection to the ages of the zodiac and to what Plato and the ancient Chinese referred to as The Great Year, consisting of alternating golden, silver, bronze and iron ages, was what accounted for the rise and fall of civilization and consciousness over the course of many thousands of years. Could there be more to the myths of a lost Golden Age than we realize?

Santalino and Von Dechend argued convincingly that most ancient myth and legends contain common elements and use a technical or scientific language cloaked in symbolism and allegory that contains real astronomical information supporting the notion that our solar system is subjected to celestial forces that always spin in a continuous cycle, a mill if you will, though sometimes the mill grinds out gold, other times salt and yet other times dirt.



God creating the stars, with the planetary spheres shown inside, according to the Prolematic order. Each sphere is marked by a star, the fourth sphere, that of the sun, being indicated by a half-visible circle.



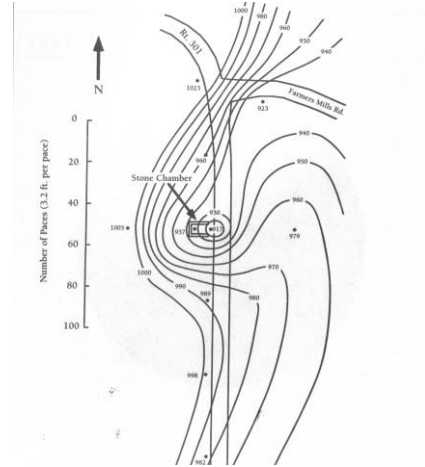
Some books and images address ancient knowledge of advanced celestial principles

This belief closely correlates with the East Indian Vedic belief in the Yuga cycles, which again are believed to be driven by the precession of the equinoxes. *The Holy Science* by Swami Sri Yukteswar explores this theme as well, defining the length and describing the characteristics of each age or Yuga as it applies to the human condition. His book, published in 1894, contained astronomic information drawn from ancient Vedic text that references concepts and principles that have been borne out by “modern” science in the century since its’ publication. These fascinating facts should be considered and applied appropriately in the context of an enlightened scientific process, but as of yet have not.

Turning back to the mystery at hand: In Putnam County, New York are located hundreds of mysterious stone chambers. These megalithic structures have entrances aligned to the winter solstice sunrise and many are said to resemble an eye and are thought to have a Celtic/Monastic influence. Many hundreds of such chambers exist in the Dutchess, Putnam, and Westchester county region of the Hudson Valley. Official explanations for the chambers range from colonial root cellars to ice houses or livestock pens. And, true enough, some or all may have been use for such purposes over the course of their existence. But it’s interesting to note: nearly all early colonial land deeds and surveys include descriptions and references to these preexisting constructions. If this construction is not originally from the colonial period, then the story becomes more intriguing.



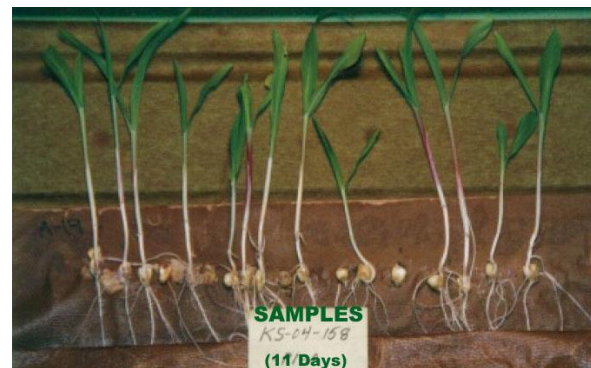
Hudson Valley stone chamber



Stone chamber associated EM “hot spot”

Because of their mysterious nature, the stone chambers of the Hudson Valley have been the subject of investigation by a number of researchers over many years. Through the research of John Burke, author of *Seed of Knowledge, Stone of Plenty* and Phillip Imbrogno author *Celtic Mysteries of New England*, it's been discovered that many chamber sites are associated with electromagnetic hotspots or are located in areas which show an increase or spike in the power density of the earth's electromagnetic field strength at that particular spot, as measured with electronic sensor equipment. This is a fascinating discovery.

Burke's groundbreaking work shows that a control group of maze seed placed in indigenously or traditionally identified electromagnetic “hot spots”, including Native American chamber locations, produced far more robust yields than “unexposed” control seed groups left in his lab.





Example of comparisons of “exposed” and “unexposed” maize seeds crop yields

One can't help wonder how these electromagnetic “hot spots” were originally identified by the chamber and mound builders. Was it an act of divination? Were “sensitive” individuals employed to locate energy sources? ...Shamans?

Another theory goes: Those building and using some of these structures were purposefully trying to manifest good energy by stripping negative ions from hydrogen electrons in water molecules? Negative ions are charged particles in our atmosphere. This process is known to occur by the act of water running over the surface of certain stone (bluestone for instance) and through constrictions in rock, natural or manmade. Releasing negative ions, which tend to raise to the highest place on the landscape such as hill and mountain tops, is known to assist in attaining and enhancing a heightened or enlightened mental state. I think there are big clues here that need to be further investigated and studied.

Concerning the EM hot spots: It's interesting to speculate; Do ley lines or unseen energy meridians, connect such locations, creating an earth grid or energy pattern across the earth's surface? Can it be focused or directed by construction of a particular configuration or if built of specific, energy conducting materials? Does the shape of mounds, standing stones or henges, wood, stone or otherwise, help direct the flow of this energy field and account for certain architectural designs and configurations at ancient sites? Does this help account for Feng Shui and similar principles from the east? Is this the geo magnetic energy field that birds and butterflies tune into to navigate while migrating great distances? No one claims to know for sure but in my article on Electromagnetism and the Ancients, I state that electro magnetism is the single common denominator of everything in nature, of everything that exists in the universe. And that perhaps the EM spectrum, that naturally occurring, continuous band of energy, ordered and organized by frequency and wavelength, is the single medium on which all of existence is recorded.



Avebury stone circle in England and the CERN collider in Switzerland

It becomes even more intriguing when we note that many megalithic “sacred sites” such as Stonehenge, Avebury, Callanish, etc. and many others, have long stone rows and circles in which, it’s recently been determined, the magnetic polarity of each set, standing stone, it’s north/south axis if you will, are all lined up in the same direction. The result would be a configuration that would accelerate energy particles (protons, electrons, etc.) along its path, not unlike a modern, high tech, particle accelerator. CERN and the LHC (Large Hadron Collider) in Switzerland is one example. This new super collider is searching to solve the greatest questions in physics; the energy/matter transfer question, by locating the so called “God Particle”. Just like today, ancient people must have wondered what the folks building these structures were trying to accomplish. Were they attempting to release the Earth’s own energy, to tap into the innate energy field of our living planet, of our living universe, to access its beneficial properties?

Back to the stone chambers; maybe these chambers serve multiple purposes. Certainly shelter from the extreme cold of winter where people could huddle together for warmth....An astronomical observatory by which the dates of the solstices and equinox were determined and monitored. It seems only logical that a structure built for astronomical use a few days of the year would serve a dual or multiple practical purposes at other times, for storage, shelter, etc.

And maybe also a place where crop seeds could be treated, blessed by the powers of the unseen world, in a way that produced increased crop yields.

Is there sufficient evidence to draw these conclusions? Probably not: But there are definite and

important clues that should be investigated and worked out.

In terms of geography, for the distribution of these lithic sites and monuments; for sites and their setting, in some cases, we can approach monument location using the concept of view sheds. (i.e. the landscape features that can be seen from each monument). We have also explored similar approaches, focusing on inter-visibility between neighboring monuments and monument, chamber, and alignment or orientation to other sites and/or the horizon, when it is clear that there is intentionality in the distribution and orientation of site monuments, which may utilize a series of locations. Although some of these approaches may be seen as flawed, the interaction between location, monument construction, and landscape must be considered as being important to a monument's builders and users.

Ever since sites like these were discovered there has been an unresolved debate for archaeologists and the general public alike regarding their function and purpose. The main three theories regarding the cairns origins or purpose are that it may be part of land surveying or subdivisions, that they are a part of agriculture related land clearing for farming or grazing, or that they're some sort of symbolic monument. There are, however, flaws within the land surveying and agriculture theories, and to claim that they are symbolic monuments seems too much of a default solution. As a real reason for them has yet to be given, this line of research looks beyond any single site to the surrounding environment and analyses the design related to the landscape to show that many are inherently aligned to celestial events and geographical elements, and that the ancient Neolithic builders may have used these sites as a link or connection between them, their home, village or territory and the powers and motions of the universe.

Now, after some time, a lot of the sites and features begin to take on a familiar look; the groups of cairns, walls, chambers, even individual stones. Researchers in eastern New England have generated a lot of material relating to lithic sites, some of which seems to be related to this tradition of aligned stone monuments. In the western US there are many lithic sites that seem to be in the same "tradition" as what we've seen here in the east. Perhaps we may be approaching the time when we will begin to get the hang of the thinking and purpose underlying these assemblages.

I believe the key to finding this out is researching the various myths and legends associated with these types of sites, but this information is not easy to come by. Regarding folklore, myths and legends; while legends can be seen as stories passed down through time which may have a seed of fact as their basis, I consider myths more like theories or ways in which ancient man attempted to explain what he experienced and observed in nature around him. Only in myths, symbolism and allegory are substitutes for the technical language and scientific terminology used in modern theories.

According to Dr. A.C. Ross, researching the oral traditions of more than 33 Native American Tribes for his book *We Are All Related*, he documented the various yearly ceremonies and rituals carried out by the tribes and discovered that the dates these celebrations took place all fell on or near the summer and winter solstices and spring and fall equinoxes.

It's also interesting to note that the traditional Native American tobacco ceremony, documented by the first arriving Europeans and still conducted in places today, as well as honoring the Grandfather Sky and Grandmother Earth, pays homage to the four cardinal directions with a symbolic animal and relating each direction to a season of the year and a stage of human life.

These facts beg the question; how did the ancient Americans determine and keep track of these celestial dates and cardinal directions, without calendar or compass and preserve that knowledge for future generations without a formal writing system? Certainly a concrete notion of where the four cardinal direction lie as well as the motions of the Sun and Moon would be essential to making such determinations.

As already noted, knowing the celestial cycles of nature was keys to predicting the seasonal changes, and finding ways to keep track of astronomical observations was probably the single biggest preoccupation of ancient, preliterate man, including those who lived in our woods. Some of these sites may be evidence that the ancient inhabitants of this land were involved in this undertaking? And as we search for this lost knowledge, we should keep in mind that our, so called "primitive" ancient ancestors knew and attempted far, far more than traditional, orthodox academia gives them credit for today.

Are some of these monuments and constructions evidence documenting, confirming and acknowledging that ancient native cultures present in this region were practicing careful celestial observations and attempting to preserve the knowledge learned from those observations in manmade or manipulated landscape monuments? And if so, did they develop this practice themselves or was it taught to them by those traveling through or arriving from elsewhere?

It appears southeastern New York may be home to one of the largest concentrations of astronomically aligned stone structures to be found anywhere with hundreds of documented, enigmatic stone structures and complexes still standing across the Catskill Mountain and Hudson Valley region. This may well be the richest archaeo-astronomical complex area in the United States, with still-functioning solstice and equinox sunrise and sunset alignments. Solving the mystery of who built them, when and why is a question worth seeking an answer to, in order to discover more about our own humanity, who we are and from where we came as we endeavor to learn from those who came before us.