

Nashoba Brook Stone Chamber

Prehistoric to Industrial era American heritage sites

This stone chamber with the adjacent stone enclosure comprise one of a group of sites that may be visited along the *Trail Through Time*, a heritage trail through North Acton conservation lands. Here can be seen remains of early Anglo-European buildings side-by-side with stone structures lying along an ancient swath of landscape sacred to Native Americans. For thousands of years, early people used this ritual landscape to sustain their reliance on Month Earth and the spirit energies of balance and harmony.

This chamber is similar to many structures that once stood throughout the Northeastern woodlands. Of unusual L-shaped design, with a 17-ft passage leading to a 6-ft square room, this structure is of modified post and lintel construction. The pillar at the junction of the passage and room is a unique feature. Eight large, overlapping rock slabs form the roof, which is mounded over with earth.

A single stone tool excavated at the site – characteristic of the Neville culture extant in the region 8,000 years ago – is inconclusive for prehistoric use because of the soil in which it was found.

Masonry evidence hints that the chamber room, built in a large cavity dug into the natural drumlin formation, may have been constructed in pre-Colonial. However, historic documents record that Moses Wood, a Revolutionary War veteran and blacksmith, established a farmstead at this site in 1774. The archaeological evidence indicates that the chamber and adjacent foundation were used concurrently and for a related purpose. The many hand-wrought nails found in the soils of the enclosure strengthen the case for a foundry at the site.

An inventory of assets compiled at the death of Samuel Tuttle, a later owner of the site, lists income from ‘rent of the ice-house,’ implying that the chamber was used to store ice cut from Nashoba Brook. Other uses include storage of farm products such as meat, root crops, apples, and cider.

The evidence, gathered by different research specialties, makes clear that the chamber was built and rebuilt to accommodate the changing needs of current owners.

Restoration of the chamber’s collapsing walls was made possible by collaborative funding from the Acton Community Preservation Committee and the New England Antiquities Research Association. This restoration was the first in the state to adhere to Massachusetts Historical Commission regulations and U.S. Secretary of Interior standards. The Acton Land Stewards and friends provided volunteer labor.