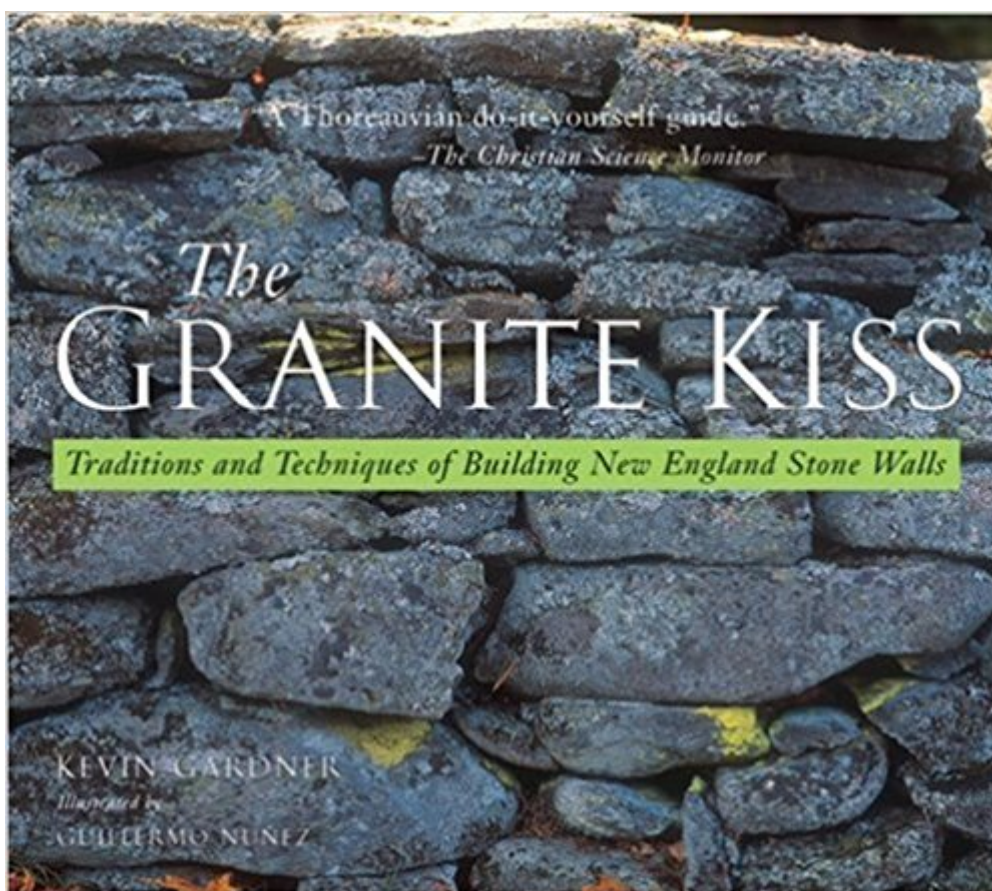


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# The Granite Kiss: Traditions And Techniques Of Building New England Stone Walls



## Synopsis

A master stonemason imparts the fundamentals of building traditional New England-style dry stone walls. In this elegant, literate primer, a master stonemason imparts the fundamentals of building traditional New England-style dry stone walls, along with thoughts on the history, aesthetics, and philosophy of the craft of placing stone. In this eminently readable primer on the fundamentals of placing stone, Kevin Gardner distills 25 years of experience in building and repairing New England-style dry stone walls into principles and practices that are adaptable to a wide variety of designs and circumstances. In addition to directions on building basic stone walls, he also demystifies steps, wells, ramps, walkways, and many other forms of dry masonry. Gardner also discusses the philosophy behind the repair and restoration of old walls, and gives the beginning wall builder ways to think about the place of the stone wall within the landscape. Along the way, Gardner considers the mythology of the stone wall and its place in the New England imagination. And he explores the history, philosophy, and aesthetics of working with stone in a book that will bring as much pleasure to armchair craftsmen as it will valuable instruction to the beginning wall builder. Selected as one of 2001's Best Gift Books by The Times of Trenton, New Jersey; one of the 50 best nonfiction books of 2001 by the Christian Science Monitor. 22 black & white illustrations, glossary, bibliography, index.

## Book Information

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: Countryman Press; 1 edition (April 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0881505463

ISBN-13: 978-0881505467

Product Dimensions: 9.1 x 0.7 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 15.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 11 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #573,031 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #52 in [Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Gardening & Landscape Design > Garden Furnishings](#) #93 in [Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Home Improvement & Design > How-to & Home Improvements > Masonry](#) #268 in [Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Gardening & Landscape Design > Outdoor & Recreational Areas](#)

## Customer Reviews

A Thoreauvian do-it-yourself guide. -- Todd R. Nelson, Christian Science Monitor

Kevin Gardner is a stone wall builder with Owen Associates, a small family business in New Hampshire that designs, constructs, repairs, and restores traditional New England-style stone walls. Gardner has participated in major restoration projects and training workshops at Canterbury Shaker Village, Acadia National Park, and many other historic sites in New England. He is also an award-winning writer and producer for New Hampshire Public Radio.

Really informative, very cool to dial in on history and how to build dry stone walls. As I have 100s of feet of walls on my property, it is great to see them in a new light

You may think an instructive book on building a stone wall would be very dry, however this work is very easy to read. Some technique, some philosophy and generally just a fun book to read. You won't learn everything but you will have a great base of how to prepare yourself, both physically and more important mentally, for building a stone wall. Looking forward to more from Kevin Gardner.

Excellent book for building or repairing a dry stone wall with a bit of history.

Great info on New England stone walls and their traditions.

Few readers will realize that the Yankee yeoman were not the builders and designers of those lovely, monumental stone walls of New England, but the First Nations! Lovely to contemplate!

Of the 180 pages the 20 or so illustrations provide more knowledge on how to accomplish the particular task shown than all of the flowery text. The 8 page glossary is helpful also. After completing 80 or so feet of new stone wall and repairing several old walls I was hoping for some insight into some tricks and wisdom from an old grey hair, but very few are in this book. There are some nice references to some styles of some older known masons of the past but as for technique, you are on your own.

Of the half-dozen books I bought in preparation for recycling some of the old stonewalls up through the woods on our farm into a new retaining wall, this is my clear favorite. It is more detailed than John Vivian's Building Stone Walls, particularly when it comes to retaining walls. Because it is not

as glossy and illustrated as Haywards' *Stone in the Garden* or David Reed's *Stonescaping* (which are, by the way, both excellent in their own right), I'm not as wary about taking it out to the project with me. The text is clear and concise, and includes a healthy dose of stone philosophy and the index is detailed enough to help the do-it-yourselfer find what he needs, but short enough so that he can find what he wants, even if he does not know the proper name for it. However, the main reason I like this book so much is Gardner's assurance that anyone who puts his mind to it -- which includes me -- can build a stone wall. While his respect for old stone walls and the art of building them is obvious, he also has a healthy dose of practicality. "The notion that all, or even most, of the old stone-work we see around New England is the result of concentrated application of arcane skill," he writes, "is demonstrably false." Once that sacred cow was out of the way, my confidence level went up and anything seemed possible. The black & white drawings that illustrate the text are clear and very helpful.

The *Granite Kiss* is an endearing look at the practical and esthetic aspects of creating and repairing stone walls. The book has an artistic quality with its extra wide pages with pen and ink drawings of walls under construction or old walls still standing. There are no photos. There is a feeling of working alongside the author while he idly rambles about the task at hand and jobs he has completed in his career. I especially enjoyed his nicknames for the various rock shapes likely to be found in any imperfect rockpile and the relationships the shapes may have to each other in a completed wall. All in all, stone wall building is a task of patience and persistence - which the author relays in topics such as: spreading the "good" rocks out; working with rocks that are not perfect blocklike shapes, time management; and what is likely to stand the test of time. This is a book to get you into the slow and methodical, but contemplative mood for learning and practicing this dying art.

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