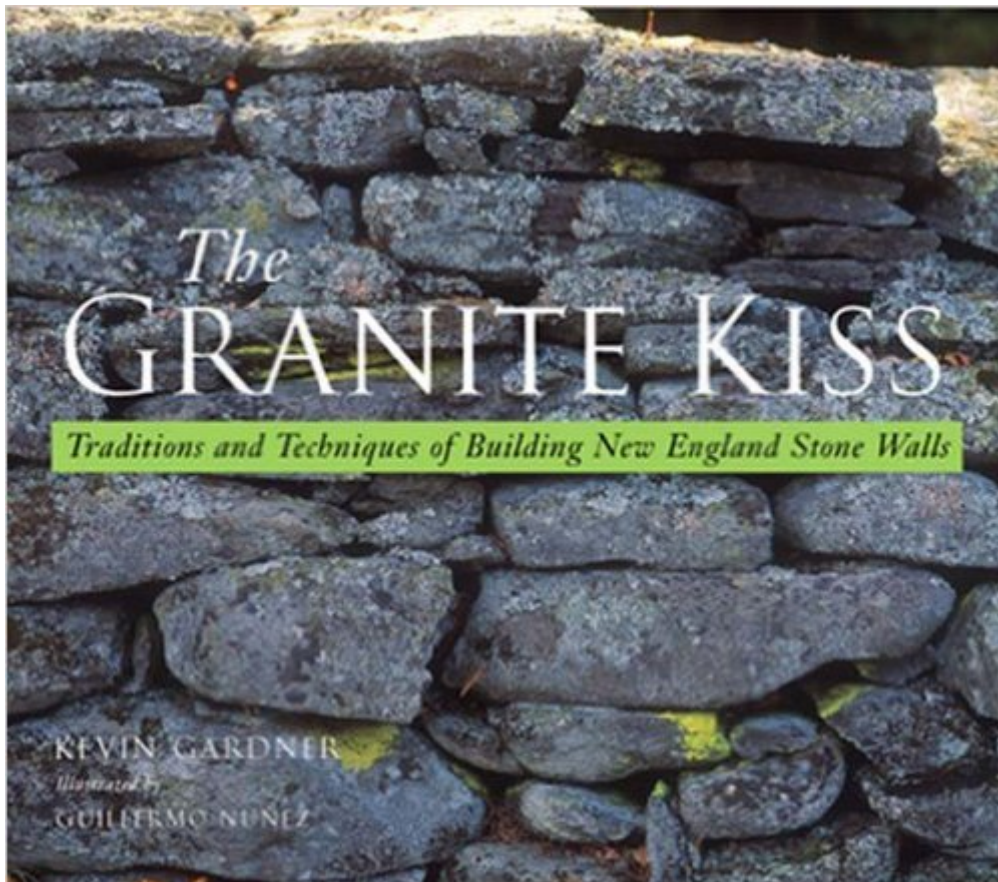


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# The Granite Kiss: Traditions And Techniques Of Building New England Stone Walls



## 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 dry stone walls, along with thoughts on the history, aesthetics, and philosophy of the craft of placing stone. Author Kevin Gardner defines "the granite kiss" as "that instantly discouraging, and inevitable, experience in stone work when a fingertip or two fails to escape the contact point between two large stones on the occasion of their first meeting." In this eminently readable primer on the fundamentals of placing stone, Gardner distills 25 years of experience in building and repairing New England-style dry stone walls into clear, step-by-step instructions. In addition to directions on building basic stone walls, he also demystifies steps, wells, ramps, walkways, and many other forms of dry masonry. Detailed illustrations throughout by Guillermo Nuñez bring the stonemason's craft to life. Along the way, Gardner considers the history, aesthetics, and philosophy of placing stone in a book that will bring as much pleasure to armchair craftsmen as it does valuable instruction to the beginning wall builder. 30 black and white illustrations Glossary Bibliography Index. Features a foreword by Susan Allport, a well-known authority on the stone walls of New York and New England and author of *Sermons in Stone* Unique focus on the rounded, hard-to-use fieldstone of New England 30 detailed illustrations are both beautiful and instructive

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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.

This is a wonderful book...it's about stone walls, and about building stone walls, and all the things stone walls have meant and done for 350 years, and what it feels like to live and work in a place where just past the urban sprawl every one of those 350 years blends with this one (and if you look out the corner of your eye there're older times than that hiding in the shadows.) It's not a homeowner howto, though it's got everything you can learn from a book. It's a book for masons who love their craft, New Englanders who love their home place, and anyone who likes good work. Whatever that means to you.

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.

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.

I surprisingly enjoyed this book. I purchased a few other stone wall books with the intention of building my own wall. I originally did not buy this book because other reviewers indicated not any pictures & a few drawings (this is true). But it is a easy read & tells of the pleasure of building in addition to techniques.

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.

I was excited to get this book, being from New England I was looking forward to having a stone wall book focused in that area. Unfortunately I was immediately let down when I received it. When I turned the pages I quickly noticed that there wasn't a single photo in the book! In my mind this is almost a crime, it would be like purchasing a book on sunsets and finding out there were only scattered black and white illustrations inside. Also, the most knowledge filled tidbits of information are quotes the author uses from other stone masons. I recommend their works instead; Charles McRaven's Stone Primer , and John Vivian's Building Stone Walls (a good mix of photos and illustrations, all in B&W, but less expensive than most.)

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

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