



BCT Stewardship Journal: December 2024

Katie's Thoughts from the Trail: Historic Stone Walls: A Hidden Treasure Revealed

With the leaves down and the dormant winter months now upon us, a unique feature of the New England landscape emerges: historic stone walls. These remnants of the past, often overlooked during the vibrant summer months, tell the story of our landscape and community's history. Historic stone walls are numerous throughout New England and here in Brewster are a cherished highlight of our conservation lands.

Historically, stone walls throughout New England served many purposes. Dating back to the colonial era, they were primarily constructed as property boundaries to delineate land in the dense wooded terrain. Farmers would build these walls to enclose livestock, divide fields and define woodlots and pastures. Early settlers took advantage of the abundant glacial stones scattered throughout the region and transformed them into functional and quaint structures. These walls are meticulously crafted, with stones stacked and fitted together without cement, demonstrating the craftsmanship and resourcefulness of the time.



Recently cleared stone wall along Stony Brook Rd at BCT's Posey property

Today, the preservation of these walls is governed by a set of laws aimed at protecting their integrity. In Massachusetts, many of these walls are recognized as historic artifacts and are protected by local bylaws. Property owners are encouraged to maintain and repair these walls rather than dismantle or alter them. BCT, dedicated to preserving the rural character of Brewster, has been making an effort to maintain stone walls on our properties, especially those located along popular roadways such as Stony Brook Rd and Main Street.

Walking along the trails of Cape Cod, we have the opportunity to not only appreciate these stone walls visually but also reflect on the stories they tell about the lives of those who came before us, and the land we inhabit today. By engaging with these structures, we foster a greater appreciation for our local history and the importance of protecting it for future generations. I encourage all to take part in preserving Cape Cod's unique landscape and heritage, ensuring that these stone walls continue to stand for years to come.