

The Dos and Don'ts of Stone Wall Building, a series of straight forward tips on building and maintaining walls is the first of these materials and was posted on the Town of Bedford's website, www.bedfordny.info, in January 2006. Click on Welcome, Departments, then Planning Department to find your way to this slide show. Wallbuilding workshops will also be posted on this site (as well as in local newspapers) and any other relevant materials. The Fence Viewer, Susan Allport, can be reached by phone at (914) 232-8687 or by e-mail at bedfordfenceviewer@gmail.com.



Don't place stones in a wall against their center of gravity. Flat stones should be placed horizontally or they will inevitably fall.

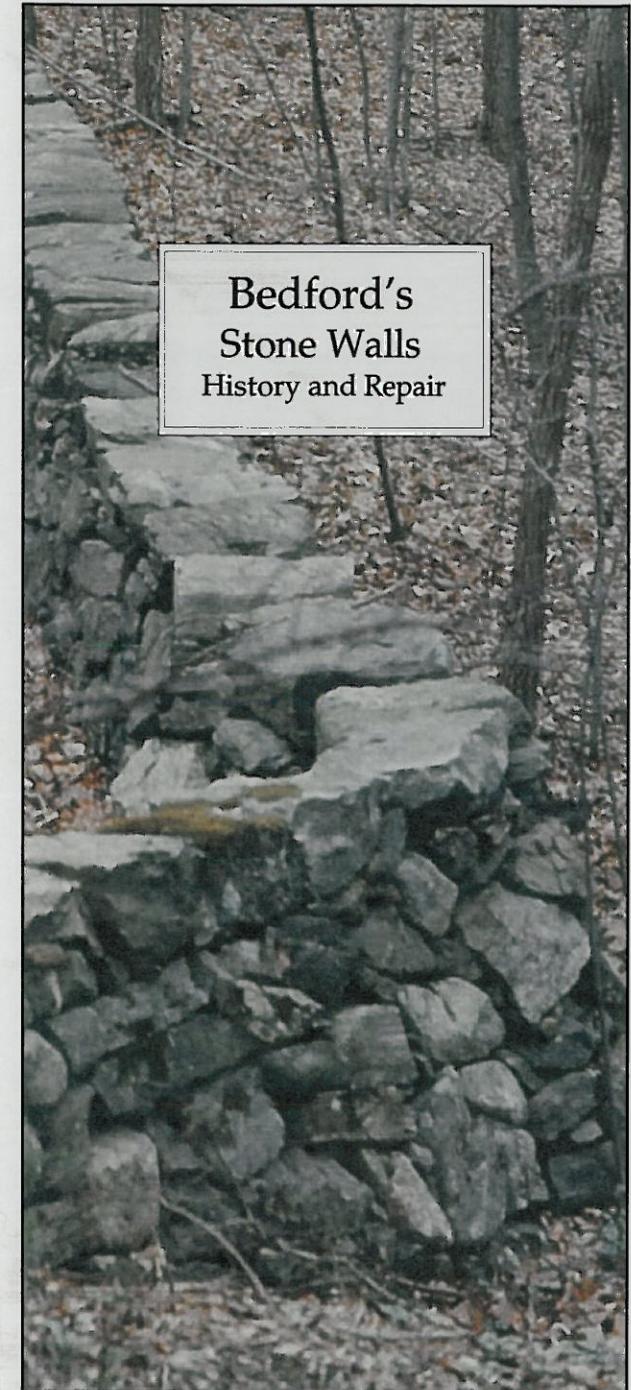
If you are considering building, rebuilding, or repairing a wall, make sure to consult with the Town of Bedford to see if your project requires a permit and to follow the town's provisions regarding fences and walls. Walls located less than 20 feet from the front lot line require a permit and should not exceed four feet in height (except on street corners where height is restricted to three feet to ensure proper sight distance).

If a new wall is to be located within 100 feet of a wetland, a wetlands permit will be required.

For questions regarding town regulations on walls and fences, contact the Bedford Building Department at (914) 666-8040. Questions can also be addressed to the Code Enforcement Officer by e-mail at WOKeefe@bedfordny.info.



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Bedford's
Stone Walls
History and Repair

Who can imagine Bedford without its stone walls?

Who would want to?

The stone walls that line our roads and fields are some of the most striking elements in our landscape. And they are some of the only reminders of our not-so-distant agricultural past. They connect us to time when sheep and cattle traveled our roads, not just cars. To a time when homeowners built walls, not to adorn their houses, but to keep the sheep out of the meadow and the cows out of the corn.



One of John Jay's handsome walls on Route 22

Many of Bedford's walls have been standing for 150 years or more. Few are better built than those at the John Jay Homestead, which were remarked on even in Jay's time. As one approaches the estate of Jay, the marks of superior taste and cultivation are apparent; reads a description published in *Homes of American Statesmen* in 1845, the stone walls are more neatly and compactly built.

Stone walls may look permanent and indestructible but their existence is threatened -- by both neglect and active removal or replacement.

Lacking information about the historic and aesthetic value of dry walls (walls built without mortar or cement), homeowners tend to replace these structures with mortared walls, which are out of character with the older forms and even more likely to develop problems over time. Or they allow their dry walls to slowly deteriorate, until so many stones are lost that it's difficult to tell where a wall once stood.



Dry walls in a state of disrepair do not need to be completely replaced, as many homeowners think, just rebuilt. The theft of stones by disreputable contractors is another enemy of walls.

The Town of Bedford recognizes the importance of stone walls to the character of the town and is taking several steps to preserve these structures. These include reviewing town policies that have an impact on walls---road maintenance and subdivision policies, for example--and the appointment of a volunteer fence viewer, whose responsibility is to create educational materials about stone walls.

Fence viewers are not new to Bedford. The first fence viewers were appointed on October 13, 1681, less than a year after settlers from Stamford, Connecticut, purchased land for the town. But the role of this position is



new. Yesterday's fence viewer was responsible for resolving conflicts between neighbors over the soundness of their fences, i.e., their ability to withstand breaches by cattle and other animals. Today's fence viewer will serve as a resource to the public regarding stone walls (and other fences) and generate materials that will raise the profile of these humble structures.