

# Stone Walls



**Stone wall at Humpback Farm on Blue Ridge Parkway**

piled from a piece of new ground. The sheer size of some suggest they were placed on wooden ground sleds pulled by horses or mules and hauled to the ever-growing walls where they were put in place by several strong men.

These stone walls are still abundant in the area in which I live, and are a visual reminder of the back-breaking work that went into building them, whether located on the property of those still living here or on the homeplaces of long-abandoned farms. They stand as silent sentinels, a nostalgic tribute to the hearty Appalachian people who first settled here and are part of history that cannot be replicated, and thus should be protected from the onslaught of progress whenever possible.

Stone walls stretching throughout the Blue Ridge Mountains are part of the early landscape built by people who settled in the Virginia highlands during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. As they began clearing the land for farming, these people found an abundance of native rock which was used to their benefit. The rocks were gathered and piled into stone walls which were a convenient and aesthetic way in which to dispose of them plus the walls could be used to mark boundary lines, family cemeteries, gardens, or keeping livestock inside a barrier as well as keeping predators out.

These fences of stone were all stacked by hand without benefit of any type of mortar or cement, each stone carefully fitted into place. They stood straight and strong, one stone depending on another for support. With heights taller than an average man and widths up to six or seven feet, one can only imagine

how many rocks were picked up and



*Stonework at the Layman Dodd farm, Cub Creek*



*Winter scene, stone wall at the top of Reed's Gap*



**Part of the same wall at the top of Reed's Gap during the summer months**



**Stone wall at the George Washington Coffey homeplace, Chicken Holler**



***Huge rocks at the Brydge farm, Reed's Gap***



***Stone walls and wooden rails on Parkway***



***Stone walls around the Massie graveyard, Level Green***

that must have gone into building them. By simply using what they had available at the time, without thinking of the future, the Appalachian people have unwittingly left a legacy for all to view and enjoy hundreds of years after their initial construction.

Those who have these early stone walls on their property are careful not to disturb them and many native Virginians have a deep, abiding attachment to the walls because they have been built upon family land that's been handed down over many generations. Our own mountain land has been in the same family for eight generations and looking at the graying walls that run serpentine across its ridges, one can only marvel at the hard work