

# THE WALLED LANDSCAPE OF GRATES COVE National Historic Site



Alexander Robertson

From the late 1700's to the early 1900's residents of Grates Cove and many other fishing outports - mostly of Irish and English descent - built stone walls. At Grates Cove the walled landscape covers 65 hectares of thrown, stacked, and/or piled stone walls built to protect scarce topsoil and crops from domestic animals and provide a shelter and a warmer crop growing environment. In addition, they built root cellars of interior stone walls and exterior turf which provided an ideal temperature for winter storage of vegetables. There is a misconception that the walls were built because of a lack of trees for post & rail fencing. Although the relatively barren landscape of Grates Cove gives that impression, there was and still is no shortage of trees in the district for rough lumber and fire wood. Since little value was placed on formal land ownership, the walls served as a permanent boundary for successive generations of a family to retain ownership of the land by custom, and worked it along with their fishery. The stone walls were a prized possession and often given affectionate names such as "Moonlight Garden" or "Grandma Warren's Chair."

The walled landscape of Grates Cove is the largest and best preserved in Newfoundland and was designated a National Historic Site in 1997.





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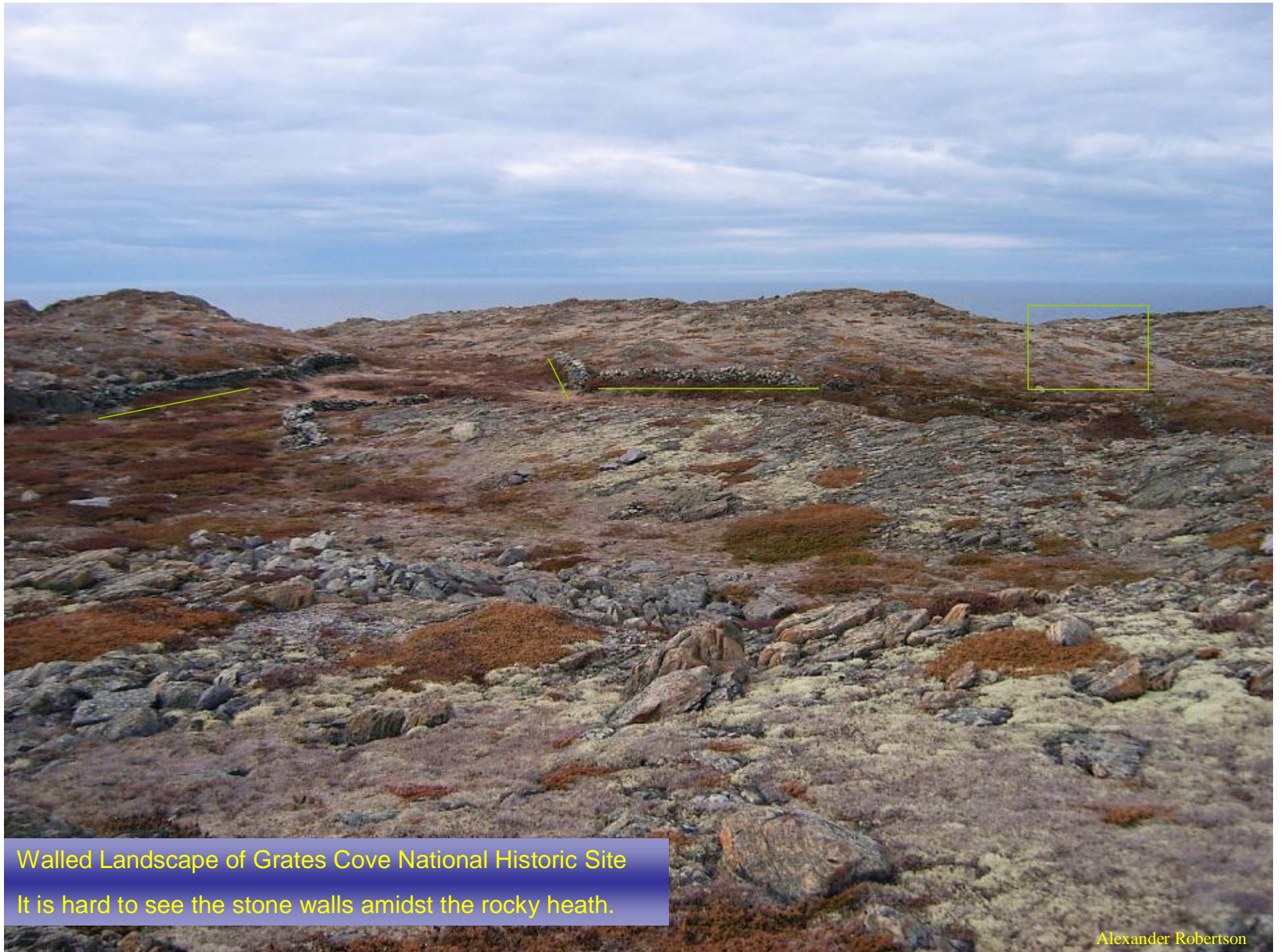




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It is hard to see the stone walls amidst the rocky heath.





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A root cellar ruin was sufficient provide enough vegetables for one family throughout the winter

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A pair of root cellar ruins in the walled landscape of Grates Cove National Historic Site.

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A simple wall in Ireland built of  
Bloody Foreland Granite stones

Patrick McAfee





Glencolumcille stone wall, Co. Donegal with a blend of boulders and flat stones is similar Grates to the Grates Cove wall construction

Patrick McAfee





This fine example of an Irish stone wall with a distinctive blend of rubble and flat stones is located about 2 km along the coast trail from Bray Head to Greystone on the outskirts of Dublin. It is an example of the high standard of Irish craftsmanship brought to Newfoundland and probably resembled the construction of the late 18th century walls at Grates Cove in their original state.





Another example of an Irish wall along  
the Bray Head to Greystone trail

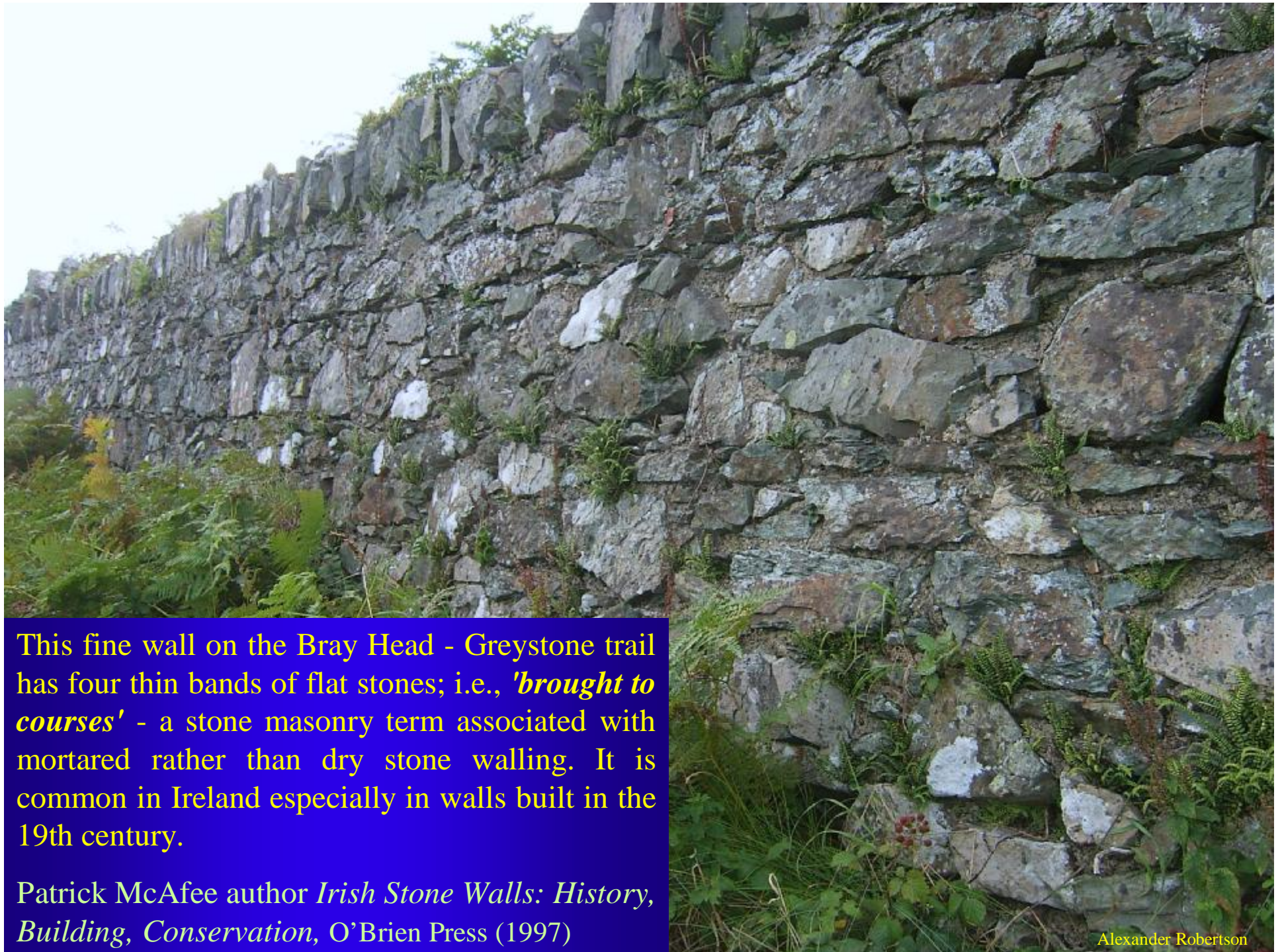
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This stone on on a steep slope on the Bray Head to Greystone trail wall is unusual in that it constructed by slanting the stones. However, as with Grates Cove walls, the perfectly straight top runs true as an arrow regardless of undulations in the topography.





This fine wall on the Bray Head - Greystone trail has four thin bands of flat stones; i.e., '**brought to courses**' - a stone masonry term associated with mortared rather than dry stone walling. It is common in Ireland especially in walls built in the 19th century.

Patrick McAfee author *Irish Stone Walls: History, Building, Conservation*, O'Brien Press (1997)

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A crude but effective blind for shooting water fowl (mostly turrs) for food. The prosperous fishing town of Old Perlican is in the distance

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