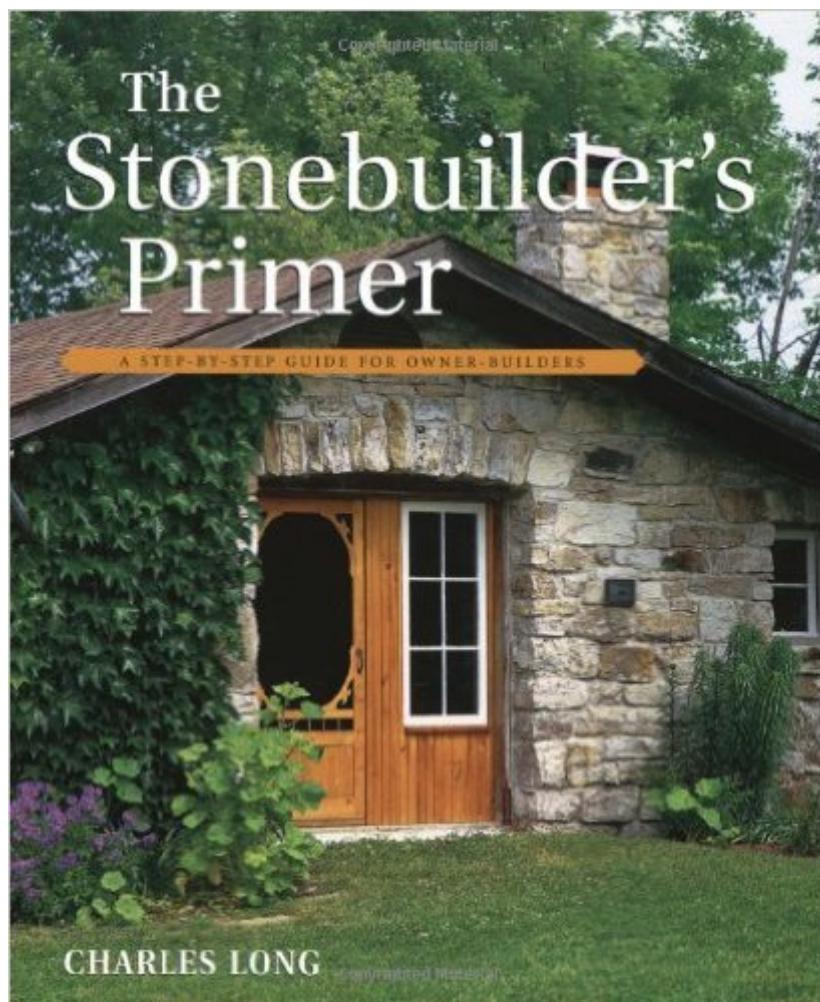


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# The Stonebuilder's Primer: A Step-By-Step Guide For Owner-Builders



## Synopsis

Writer Charles Long has a well-earned reputation as one of North America's self-sufficiency experts. More than 20 years ago, he and his wife, Elizabeth, fled city life and conventional employment for the country, and have flourished there ever since. Now back by popular demand Long's *The Stonebuilder's Primer* is a highly readable account of the couple's successful effort to build "a house that will outlast anything made of wood." Developing a compromise method of stone construction that is both simpler and truer to the stonemason's art than the popular slipform method, the Longs built an aesthetically satisfying home of stone on a limited budget and no previous construction experience. In this classic how-to book, the author describes the complete building process in clear, easy-to-follow steps and, in so doing, dispels the myth of difficulty that surrounds stone construction.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I bought this book because of the author's review -- he described wanting to build a house from stone the easiest and cheapest way possible. He and his wife did the homework to learn how to do it -- first by research, then by doing -- so I bought the book, hoping it would give my family the information we needed to get started on our rock house. It did. The book provides easy to read narrative that takes you through each step of the process. It tells you what supplies you need, how to pick a site, how to pick the best stones, where to find stones, and what hardships you will encounter while working. It also explains away the mysteries of stone building and provides

techniques for handling details such as windows and doors. The best thing the book gave us was the confidence to get started on our project to build our rock house. We had talked about it for months. Now, since we've read this book, we've cleared our site and have started our first wall!

I rarely write a review despite the fact that I read so many books, but felt this one deserved special attention. I am looking to build a log home in Southeast Alaska and wanted to have a nice rock wall foundation and a spectacular fireplace. After reading this book I am confident that I can do most of the work myself (except the footing for the foundation) and feel confident that it will look totally professional (and be bomb proof). The book is well written, very readable, has good photos, and is probably the only book you will need to do any and all stone work. It is not a book on slip form and it is not a coffee table book - it is for building in stone.

The experiences of Mr. Long will interest many 'would-be' masons, contemplating construction of a stone wall of any form. The book is not a 'how-to' guide as much as a 'how I figured it out' or 'how I got the rock to the top of the wall.' Those with masonry experience will probably find this unnecessary, but anyone considering a masonry adventure will find the reading well worth the effort. Mr. Long's experiments in man-handling rock, using ramps and building scaffolds are exactly what amateur masons need to read. The book is fairly shy about the author's handiwork. The finished house is never displayed, and 'example' photos are generally shots of 19th century buildings. Additionally, there is nothing on how long it took to accomplish their tasks. There are lots of photos showing the author and wife man-handling rocks, though. The book seems to be set in the north-eastern United States, and Mr. Long's advice for finding rocks may be unsuited to other areas. As best I can tell, the book advises picking up a suitable rock when ever one one. This might happen on the shoulder of a highway, while driving past a farmer's field or wandering around old quarries. Mr. Long suggests all non-masons are overjoyed when anyone hauls away a rock. I'm not convinced.

This is an entertaining, well written book by an amateur stonemason, who (with his wife) has built his own house and other projects in stone. The book is encouraging for the amateur and seems likely to produce excellant results. It covers many aspects of stonework, from collecting stones to actual construction. Mr. Long discusses the "slipform" method, which he rejected for the cost of the lumber, the time spent in preparation, the appearance of the finished work (which, he argues, resembles veneer), and its limitation to modular designs. (From his description, apparently slipforms

are moveable forms in which stone walls are built, which forms are slipped up to the next level to build the wall higher.) He acknowledges that the slipform method inspired him in developing part of his own method, which uses an interior frame wall and a loose sheathing piece as a form for the back of the stone wall. The BOCA National Building Code, which applies in my town, requires that rubblestone walls be a minimum of 16 inches thick. Mr. Long recommends substantially thicker walls (dependant on height of the wall), although he refers to an unidentified building code that allows 12 inch walls to 35 feet in height. To me, it seems to be a great waste of space and energy to build stone walls thicker than they need to be. I have ordered more books on the subject, as I believe it is easier to read an extra book than to gather, stack and mortar an extra 20 tons of stone. However, I expect that this book will be of use to me if I ever actually get around to building in stone.

In pursuit of my pipe dream of building a stone house, I picked up this book. Dangerously, it fed into my (previously-thought) unrealistic plans. The book is well-balanced between science and art; it doesn't stray too far from the "how-to," or science of building a stone house, but it does provide a good measure of humor & pictures. It's quite readable and supportive of the whole daydreaming process, but I get the feeling that if I ever get around to building the stone house, it would also be an excellent reference.

There's a Polish saying that to be a man one has to plant a tree, raise a son, and build his own house. Well, I've got the tree part down, and I'll settle for raising a male beagle, but at some point I'm going to get out of apartment dwelling and build a house. When I do it'll be made of stone, so I picked up this book. Reading it was a bit of fantasy for me, but from what I can tell it's quite instructional with many great photographs to back up the text. It details how to make a correct foundation, how to build archways, and also has nice tips about how much mortar to make and how to control the logistics of construction and supplies. It also has dashes of humor. If you're going to make a stone house, or need info on the process for a book or project, I suggest this title to help you out.-- JJ Timmins

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