

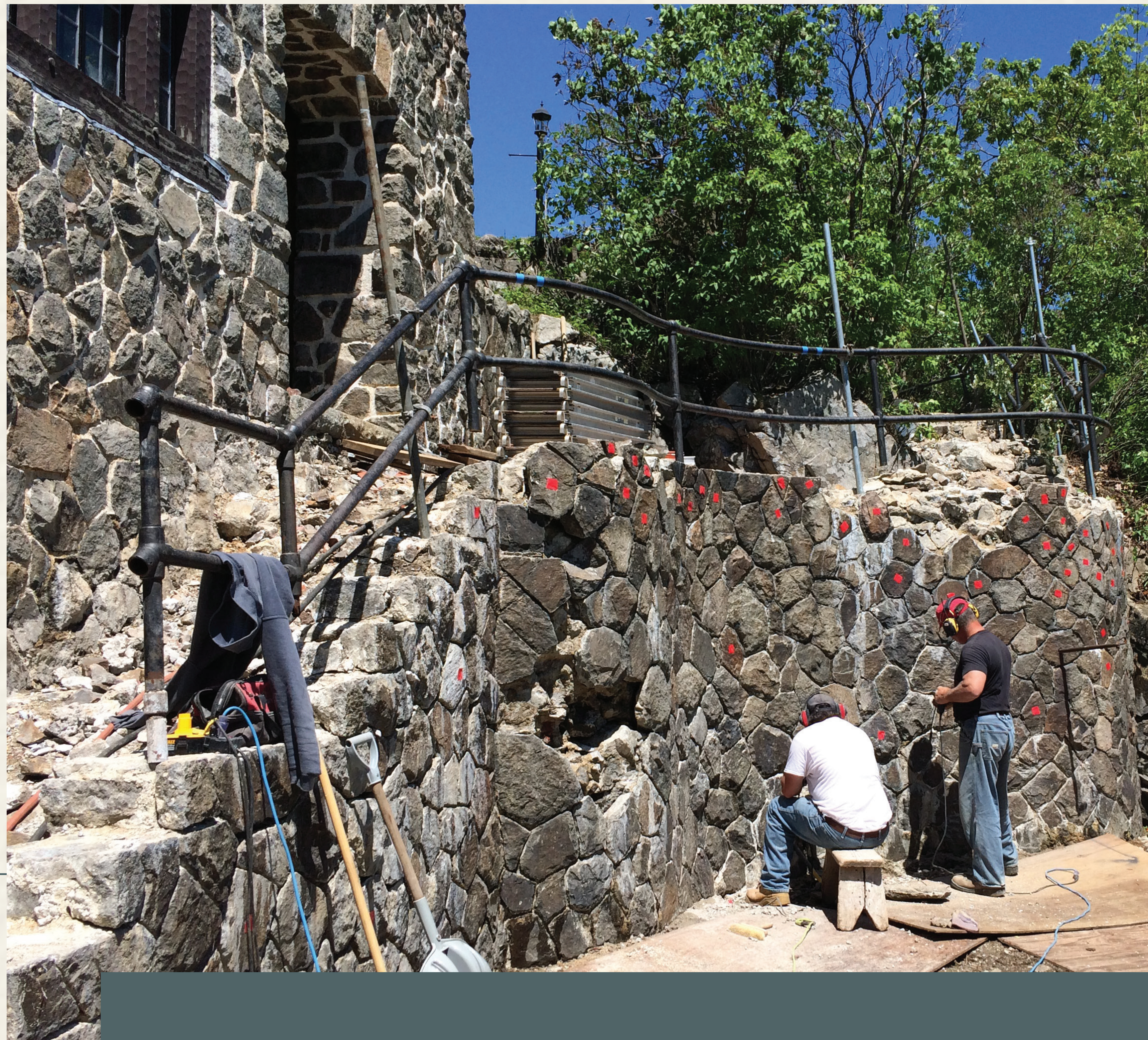
Masonry Mysteries

The masons who helped construct the Castle over one hundred years ago in 1914 carefully chiseled native stone into 3, 4, 5, and 6 sided pieces, fitting them all together like a jigsaw puzzle around the exteriors of the Castle and Carriage House. The use of native stone (pink Conway granite and gray rhyolite) resulted in buildings that reflected their natural landscape. The masons laid the mortar deep to give the illusion that none was used at all and to emphasize the three dimensional appearance of the stones.

To restore the now crumbling mortar that holds these stone facades in place, a massive process of repointing has begun at the Castle.

Expert preservation masons are working their way around the building and the Castle's huge retaining walls. Each wall is first photographed, then, all the stones are numbered and mapped out on a diagram, and finally removed so that the masons can assess and restore the mortar behind and around each of the stones. Old, failed mortar is drilled away, and the masons use their numbered diagram to carefully place each stone back where it came from, surrounded by a fresh bed of mortar.

Restoration masons from Stepping Stones Masonry work on the crumbling basement stair wall in 2017.



Investigate!

Were the Castle veneer stones hand-cut to their final shapes or were they already shaped that way to begin with? One theory cites that the Castle and Carriage House's stones were sliced from the columns of volcanic rock that exist in the nearby mountains. "Columnar jointing" occurred over 100 million years ago after a massive volcano imploded and the lava cooled quickly, forming five sided stone columns. However, expert stone masons working on the Castle's restoration think differently – they see evidence of the Castle's multi-sided veneer stones having been chiseled and worked by human hands on all surfaces.



Examine the evidence below. Are there any other clues that should be considered? Decide which pieces of evidence you believe to be most credible.



Tom Ahearn of Stepping Stones Masonry restoring a stone stanchion outside the Castle's sun parlor.