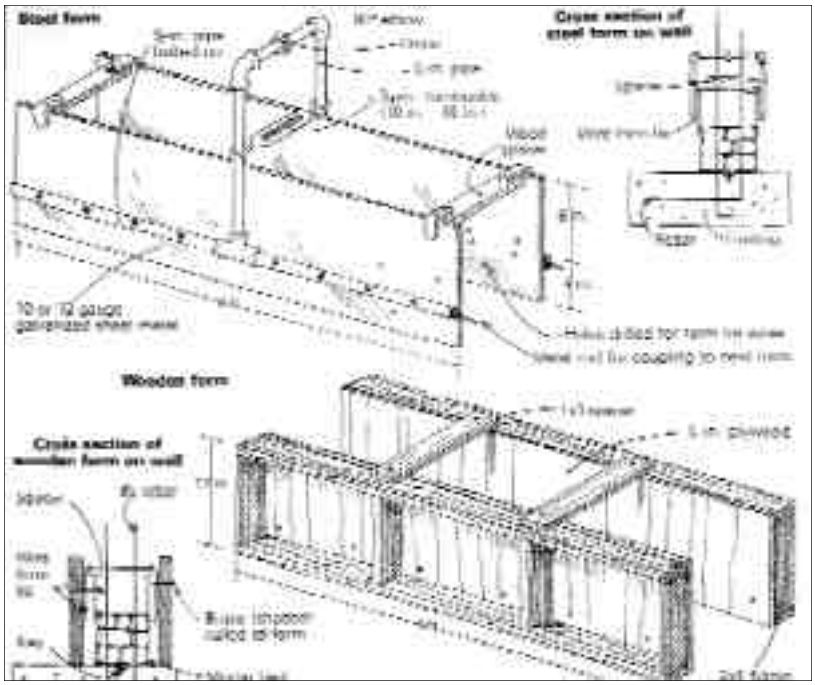
SLIP-FORM STONEWORK:

AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO TRADITIONAL STONEMASONRY

First of six pages.

by Jim Underwood



MOST STONEMASONS, especially those who love traditional, well-crafted dry stonework, are uncomfortable with regard to slip-form stonework. Some abhor the very idea of it. I believe, however, that there is a valid niche for slip-form stonework in the array of approaches we use and that it is a practical alternative for the owner-builder who in most cases lacks the experience, skills and confidence of a mason.

Engineers and the building code people may or may not have aesthetic sensibilities but their mandated professional responsibilities are codified in manuals that focus on structural safety. In a recent history film that I saw there appeared a list of the stone-built cathedrals and castles in medieval England that had collapsed not long after they were constructed. Lessons learned from buildings that endured through the centuries and, probably more importantly, from buildings that failed in short order, gradually brought engineering and code standards to dominate our building practices. Generalized standards sometimes seem very unreasonable, especially in specific circumstances, and we complain of a society too litigious to allow the use of many traditional materials such as stone in modern construction, except as veneer. Other than landscaping walls, most stone work today is relegated to non-structural aspects in building.

Excellent dry-stone work is a personal love and profession; but my sympathy is with owner-builders, with helping them utilize inexpensive and locally available natural materials as much as possible to build tight and efficient buildings. Consequently I like approaches and materials that engineers and code officials understand and accept, and that the less skilled person can comprehend and use. In addition to building dry-stone and mortar-laid walls I have over the years adopted, modified and practiced a slip-form approach to stone work. Each approach does, in fact, tend to address a different masonry purpose.

BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS

STONE FOUNDATION HOME PAGE