

## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: A Communal Retreat for Writers in the Adirondacks

Degree candidate: Kirin Joya Makker

Degree and year: Master of Architecture, 2002

Thesis directed by: Assistant Professor Randall Mason  
School of Architecture

This thesis will explore the design of a retreat for writers in Adirondack Park in upper New York State. The intent of the project is to investigate how the 'border' between a group of buildings and the natural wooded landscape in which they sit may be blurred. It is the assumption of the author that rendering indistinct this border between the built and the natural will have bearing on whether a human's relationship to nature is harmonious.

This study considers the transition (space, plane, or volume) from built to natural material: how do a compound, a building, and a construction detail meet the natural world in a manner in which the distinction between natural and human built is unconventionally blurred? How do a collection of buildings, a structure, and a detail suggest a harmonious relationship with the natural setting in which, or with which, they sit? The purpose of this thesis is to explore these questions and thus investigate the transition of natural landscape to built work at a variety

of scales: the site scale, the building scale, and the detail scale.

A COMMUNAL RETREAT FOR WRITERS IN THE ADIRONDACKS

by

Kirin Joya Makker

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the  
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Architecture  
2002

Advisory Committee:

Assistant Professor Randall Mason, Chair  
Professor Ralph Bennett  
Professor Gary Bowden

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures .....	iii
Introduction .....	1
Camp.....	1
Writing and Retreating.....	3
Design Objectives .....	7
Regional History and Site Location .....	9
Site History .....	14
Site Analysis .....	18
Site Selection Analysis.....	30
Precedent Analysis .....	33
Precedent 1: Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, Deer Isle, ME.....	34
Precedents 2 & 3: Camp Bliss & Camp Hayden, Fishkill, NY.....	45
Precedent 4: Darwin D. Martin House and Garden, Buffalo, NY .....	47
Precedent 5: Cabin, Catocotin Mountains, Maryland .....	52
Precedent 6: Adirondack Camp Architecture .....	58
Program .....	66
Workshop Schedule .....	67
Course Descriptions .....	67
Workshop Publication.....	69
Program Elements: Written Description .....	70
Exterior Spaces and Site Development .....	70
Living Areas .....	70
Administrative Spaces .....	71
Classroom Spaces.....	71
Lounge and Lab Facility.....	71
Dining Facility .....	72
Program Elements: Tabulation.....	73
Program Elements: Graphic Synopsis.....	76
Schemes.....	80
Scheme 1: Waterford, VA.....	81
Scheme 2: On the Water.....	84
Scheme 3: Island.....	86
Scheme 4: In the Valley .....	88

Scheme Discussion .....	90
Project Documents.....	91
Bibliography .....	95

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Map of New York State and region .....	11
Figure 2: Location of Adirondack Park within New York State .....	12
Figure 3: Location of site within Adirondack State Park .....	12
Figure 4: Map of region near Newcomb, NY .....	13
Figure 5: Map of Santanoni Preserve .....	14
Figure 6: Aerial View of Santanoni Main Camp .....	15
Figure 7: Santanoni First Floor Plan .....	16
Figure 8: View of Porch, Santanoni Main Camp .....	17
Figure 9: Region topography and hydrology .....	19
Figure 10: Region mountains .....	20
Figure 11: Region topography, rendered .....	21
Figure 12: Region surface hydrology, roads, and buildings .....	22
Figure 13: Regional hiking trails surrounding site .....	23
Figure 14: Site topography, streams, water body and existing hiking trails.....	24
Figure 15: Site slope analysis .....	25
Figure 16: Site sections .....	26
Figure 17: Key plan indicating section cut lines .....	26
Figure 18: Solar path diagram for Newcomb Lake.....	27
Figure 19: Prevailing winds .....	28
Figure 20: Chart of average weather conditions for Newcomb, NY .....	29
Figure 21: Site Selection Analysis Key .....	30
Figure 22: Precedent 1 – Aerial view of Haystack Mountain Crafts School .....	36

Figure 23: Precedent 1 – Site section .....	36
Figure 24: Precedent 1 – Site Plan, Haystack Mountain Crafts School .....	37
Figure 25: Precedent 1 – Program tabulation, Haystack School.....	38
Figure 26: Precedent 1 – Haystack placed on thesis project site.....	41
Figure 27: Precedent 1 – Diagram of site .....	42
Figure 28: Precedent 1 – Diagram of sleeping cabin .....	43
Figure 29: Precedent 1 – View of built paths .....	43
Figure 30: Precedent 1 – View of built paths adjacent to sleeping cabins .....	44
Figure 31: Precedent 2 – Camp Bliss site plan .....	45
Figure 32: Precedent 3 – Camp Hayden site plan .....	46
Figure 33: Precedent 4 – Birds Eye View of Martin House .....	48
Figure 34: Precedent 4 – Plan of Martin House and Garden .....	49
Figure 35: Precedent 4 – Diagram of Martin House.....	50
Figure 36: Precedent 5 – Exterior view of cabin .....	53
Figure 37: Precedent 5 – Interior view of cabin.....	53
Figure 38: Precedent 5 – Ground Floor Plan .....	54
Figure 39: Precedent 5 – Section through living area .....	55
Figure 40: Precedent 5 – View of column base plate assembly.....	56
Figure 41: Precedent 5 – Plan of column base .....	57
Figure 42: Precedent 5 – Elevation of column base.....	57
Figure 43: Precedent 6 – Lean-to structure, 1893.....	59
Figure 44: Precedent 6 – platform tent, late 1800's .....	60
Figure 45: Precedent 6 – log cabin, Raquette Lake, 1984 .....	61

Figure 46: Precedent 6 – Adirondack League Club, Bisby Lake, 1988 .....	61
Figure 47: Precedent 6 – Ausable Clubhouse, Ausable Lake, 1890 .....	62
Figure 48: Precedent 6 – Swiss Cottage, Camp Pine Knot, 1883 .....	62
Figure 49: Precedent 6 – View of porch, Eagle Island Camp .....	63
Figure 50: Precedent 6 – Putnam Camp porch, late 1800's .....	63
Figure 51: Precedent 6 – covered walk, Camp Kwenogamac, 1904 .....	64
Figure 52: Precedent 6 – covered walk, Read Camp, 1906 .....	64
Figure 53: Precedent 6 – Gazebo, c. 1890 .....	65
Figure 54: Precedent 6 – Summer house, Lake George, c. 1910 .....	65
Figure 55: Scheme 1 – Waterford, VA section diagram .....	81
Figure 56: Scheme 1 – section .....	82
Figure 57: Scheme 1 – plan .....	82
Figure 58: Scheme 2 – plan .....	84
Figure 59: Scheme 2 – section .....	85
Figure 60: Scheme 2 – Image to illustrate building/landscape relationship .....	85
Figure 61: Scheme 3 – plan .....	87
Figure 62: Scheme 4 – In the valley .....	88
Figure 63: Scheme 4 – Image illustrating building/landscape relationship .....	89
Figure 64: Proposed site plan .....	91
Figure 65: Boathouse .....	92
Figure 66: Bunkhouse .....	92
Figure 67: Exploded axon dining building .....	93
Figure 68: Exploded axon connection .....	94



## Introduction

*We would guard and defend and save [wilderness] as a place for all who wish to discover the nearly lost pleasures of adventure, adventure not only in the physical sense, but also mental, spiritual, moral, aesthetic, and intellectual adventure. A place for the free.* Edward Abbey<sup>1</sup>

## Camp

Camp implies an intimate relationship with nature. This relationship is not as general as the consideration of buildings in a landscape; it does not include examples of farm, plantation, or town settlement. It is the author's assumption that these kinds of human habitation on the land are introverted; they are about enclosure and protection from the weather or the wild. A camp enjoys an extroverted association with the natural world.

Before the mid-nineteenth century, the region now known as Adirondack Park was "largely *terra incognita*," and thought by European settlers to be a hostile environment only temporarily inhabited by Native Americans.<sup>2</sup> In the 1850's and through the end of the century, "Romantic writers and other artists...had transformed attitudes towards the wilderness, transmuting aversion into attraction." The region formerly avoided in the minds of northeastern Americans became "a place offering escape, if only briefly, from crowded cities,

---

<sup>1</sup> Abbey, Edward, *The Journey Home* (New York, NY: Peter Smith Publisher, 1993) 88.

<sup>2</sup> The area has a history of logging although few histories focus on this use; most other industrial uses of the are (mining) were failed attempts; road often restricted industrialization of what is now Adirondack State Park.

post-War industrialization, and from cultural change. There one might retreat to the newly rediscovered, romantic, restorative world of nature.”<sup>3</sup>

The Great Camps in the Adirondacks have a distinct regional style and history of development. “Geography, available building materials, weather, and the history of settlement in the area influence the development of a regional style of architecture.”<sup>4</sup> A rugged terrain, a plentiful supply of timber and granite, shared building traditions of the early craftspeople shaped the style and construction of the Great Camps. Materials from the region contributed to the harmonizing quality of the camp buildings into the landscape. The separation of program elements such as sleeping, dining, and socializing into single-purpose structures is originally thought to have developed to prevent the spread of possible fires. These buildings were then connected by covered paths to protect campers from precipitation.

Although these practical reasons conclude, camps likely developed this way to promote a harmony with nature for inhabitants. Considering the entire camp to be the domesticated setting reveals an integration of the natural world and the structures placed within it; camps are compounds composed of equal parts landscape and building.

---

<sup>3</sup> Engel, Robert, Howard Kirschenbaum, and Paul Malo, Santanoni: From Japanese Temple to Life at an Adirondack Great Camp (New York: Adirondack Architectural Heritage, 2000) 24.

<sup>4</sup> Kaiser, Harvey H., Great Camps of the Adirondacks (Boston: Godine Publisher, Inc., 1982) 10.

## Writing and Retreating

*I just received feedback on a book-length manuscript. To be honest, I didn't like what I heard--at first. I sat back and scowled. A stubborn voice inside my head told me that I knew what I was doing, and I didn't need this criticism. But then I thought about it. What I wrote does not belong to me; it's not a part of my brain any more. It's something to be read and understood, and if my careful readers don't get something, I need to take a closer look at the manuscript. The words are merely something I've put together in my sometimes careless and meandering way. Just because I think they say something doesn't mean they do. The workshopers--my devoted first readers--will let me know what's really going on. Michael Henry<sup>5</sup>*

Paul Theroux says in his book Fresh Air Fiend, that, "whatever else travel is, it is also an occasion to dream and to remember."<sup>6</sup> Writers often find that being removed from the responsibilities of their everyday lives fosters focus and frees their creative spirit. Andrea Dupree, a writing workshop veteran, explains that travel, whether it is a trip to an unfamiliar city or a retreat into the woods, takes us out of the known. "And as we try to assimilate to the unknown, we imagine, observe, equivocate, and judge. We become mesmerized by life's minutiae, and this is how we create."<sup>7</sup>

Besides escaping the known, writers intent on stirring their creativity toward fruition need at different times differing amounts of solitude and community experience. Some writers need the company of others around them; some can't focus unless they are alone. All writers, just beginning or with much

---

<sup>5</sup> Michael Henry, "The Workshop: When is it Enough?" in The Inkwell Newsletter, (January/February, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Theroux, Paul, Fresh Air Fiend: Travel Writings, (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2000) 17.

<sup>7</sup> Andrea Dupree, "On Retreat: Approaching the Heart of Writing" in The Inkwell Newsletter, (September/October, 2000).

experience, who want to improve their writing inevitably join writing groups to revise and revisit ideas. Long time writer Michael Henry explains:

Writing is lonely work. Master writers have solitary, austere offices with ancient desks, attractively worn bookshelves. The room itself is typically devoid of conversation. Perhaps there is music playing: Something classical, or maybe some jazz, drifts softly through the air. The master writer drapes an off-white cardigan over his or her shoulders, and goes to work. The words flow easily, but the writer never knows what the words say exactly until someone else has seen them—a first audience. For most of us, the first-audience is a group of fellow writers.<sup>8</sup>

Because of the tradition of writing workshops and writing groups, communal experience is always a part of the writing process.

The need to escape, the need to be isolated amongst other writers to focus on something that takes a great deal of concentration and time – these requirements give workshops the guise of a spa or retreat and often place writing workshops in the natural environment. However, a writer's retreat could easily take place in a city; Paul Theroux's stated sentiment earlier tells us escape is just a matter of leaving the familiar and one could travel to an unknown city as well as one could travel to a lake in a forest.

This thesis project makes a point of communing human habitation with an immediate natural environment; a writer's retreat in the woods draws on a population who finds solace, focus and inspiration in a rural experience. Drawing these kinds of writers into this setting gives the workshop the opportunity to be a retreat into nature and sponsor a curriculum that embraces the forest and lake

---

<sup>8</sup> Michael Henry, "The Workshop: When is it Enough?" in The Inkwell Newsletter, (January/February, 2001).

scenery of the site. Furthermore, a tradition of nature writing can be integrated into some courses at the workshop.

*The cultural values of peripheral areas will also be recognized when man becomes more urbanized. Even the future will have a need for wilderness, places of solitude and rest from a strictly digital world. Anna-Maija Ylimaula<sup>9</sup>*

---

<sup>9</sup> Ylimaula, Anna-Maija, The Oulu School of Architecture: Towards a New Millenium (Helsinki: The Finnish Building Center Ltd., 1993)14. Thanks to Craig Carbrey for this quotation.

## Design Objectives

Over one hundred years ago, Henry David Thoreau went to live in the woods around Concord, Massachusetts, “to live deliberately.” He writes, “Let us spend one day as deliberately as Nature, and not be thrown off track by every nutshell and mosquito’s wing that falls on the rails”.<sup>10</sup>

In their relationship to the natural world, Americans have always had two opposing cultural legacies. One derives from the metaphor of building a city on a hill, claiming the natural world, shielding city inhabitants from the wild. The other derives from something Thoreau describes in *Walden*, his book about his experiences in the woods. Thoreau characterizes an American fascination with enjoying nature and with trying to live harmoniously with it.

Living with nature describes a unique relationship with the seasons, with the passage of time that depends more on the life cycles than a clock. Living with nature also describes an appreciation for ecological systems, nature as a confluence of connected species, of which humans may only be observers. In order to promote any human communion with nature, humans must have a place to be within it. This place must feel safe, but not shut nature out.

The border between the built and the natural is this thesis’ subject of study. This project will seek to promote a harmonious relationship for humans with the natural world through a design of a camp which functions as a writer’s retreat. It is the assumption of the author of this project that the character and

---

<sup>10</sup> Thomas, Owen, Ed., *Walden and Civil Disobedience: Henry David Thoreau* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1966) 65.

mechanics of the transition from natural to built and from built to natural have bearing on whether a human's relationship to nature is harmonious.



## Regional History and Site Location

Adirondack State Park is located just west of Vermont and 200 miles northwest of New York City. The Park's six millions acres were set aside in 1882 by the New York State Legislature which enacted measures that guarantee this landscape will remain "forever wild."<sup>11</sup> The region is rich with natural scenery including hundreds of miles of waterways and 42 mountain peaks over 4,000 feet.

Regarded as a wilderness to which to escape from the dense urban conditions of the City, New Yorkers have historically fled to summer camps in the Adirondacks since even before the park's creation. From the time just after the Civil War and up to the depression, wealthy city inhabitants built family vacation retreats in these mountains, many of which have been converted into lodges and facilities for the public.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to private camps, several clubs developed camps in this region. Among the earliest of these associations was the Philosophers' Camp, a group which included James Russell Lowell, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Louis Agassiz, Dr. Jeffries Wyman, Dr. Estes Howe, and W. J. Stillman. Emerson was highly influenced by his experience at the Philosophers' Camp; it "provided him with the opportunity to test his philosophy of transcendentalism and commune with

---

<sup>11</sup> <http://adirondacks.org/overview.shtml>

<sup>12</sup> <http://aarch.org>

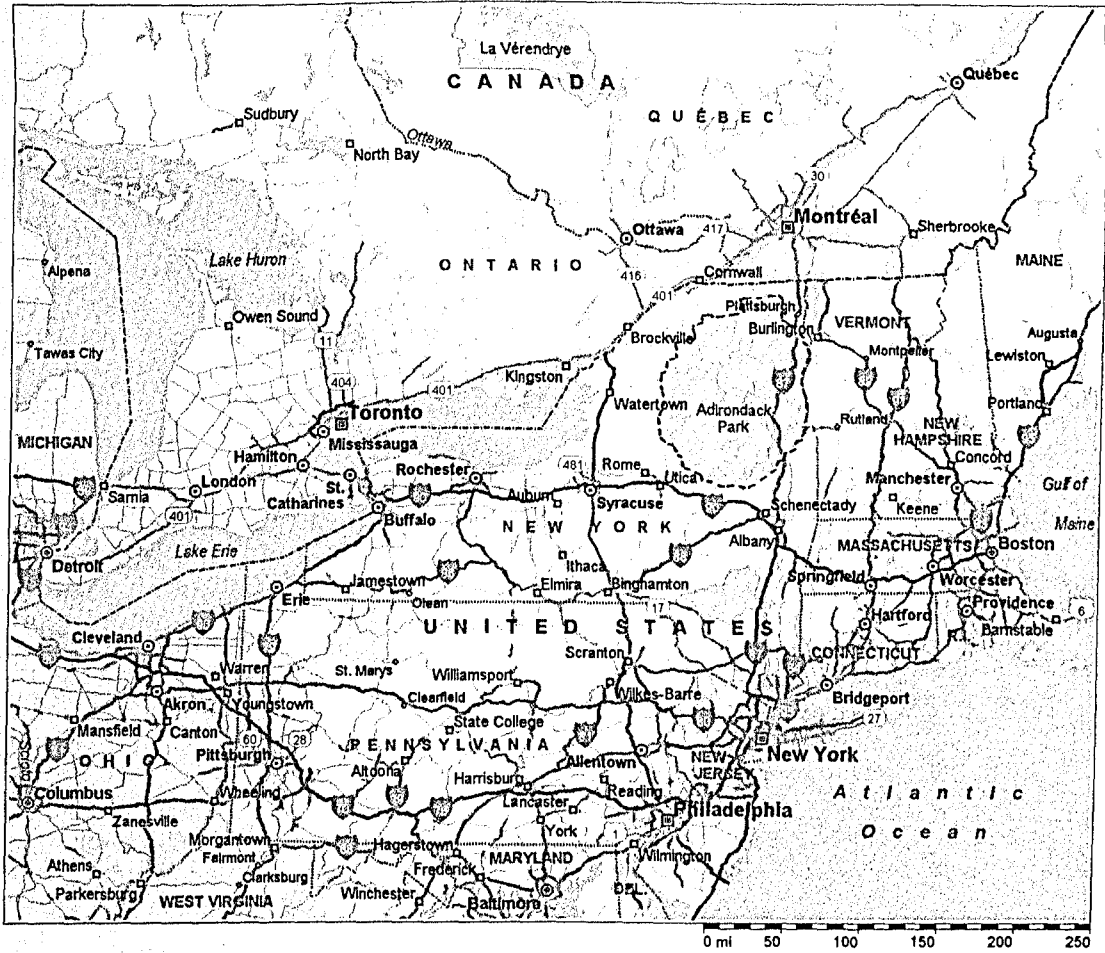
nature.” In fact, he recorded his experiences in a personal journal and wrote a narrative poem entitled, “The Adirondacks.”<sup>13</sup>

It is this legacy of embracing the wild and a tradition of camp, thoughtful reflection, and retreat in this region that make it an appropriate site for a Retreat for Writers. The cultural history of this region clearly supports the program intentions of this thesis project; however even without the obvious association with the birth of transcendentalism, this region is an appropriate setting for modern day writers in search of community and an opportunity to focus. A place that is “forever wild,” and therefore obviously separate from city life, is appropriate for both camp and concentration.

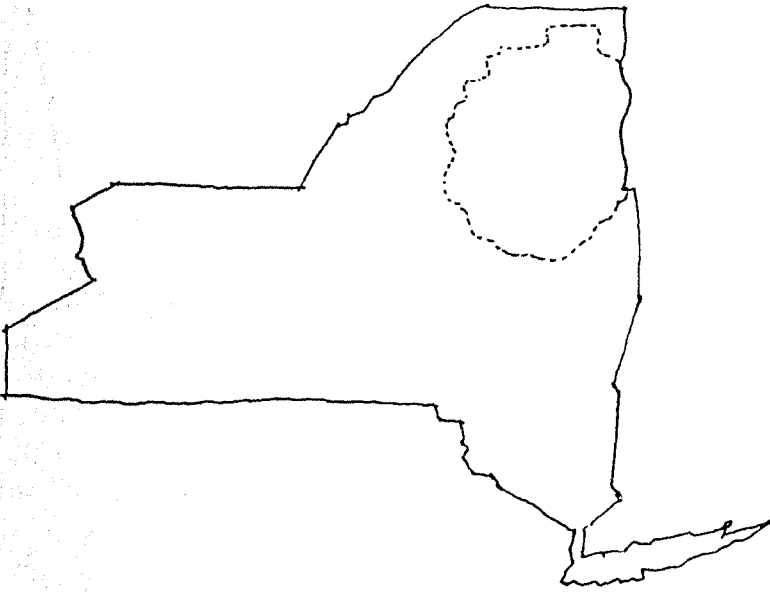
The site is on the northern edge of Newcomb Lake about three miles north of the town of Newcomb, NY. The site may be accessed via two dirt roads, Adirondack Park Preserve R. off route 28N and Deerland Rd. off route 25. Either road will need to be extended to reach the site.

---

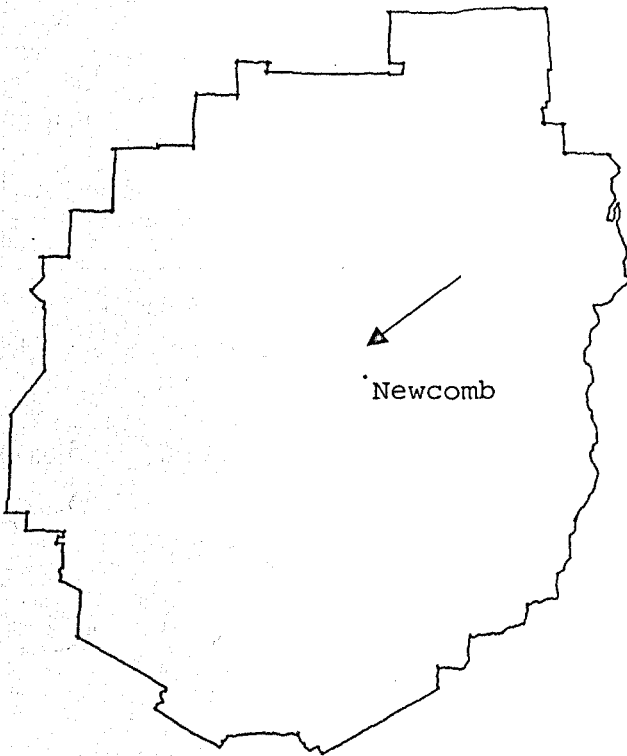
<sup>13</sup> Adirondack Yesteryears: A Guide to Adirondack Historic Sites, Museums & Events Today (Adirondack Regional Tourism Council) 13.



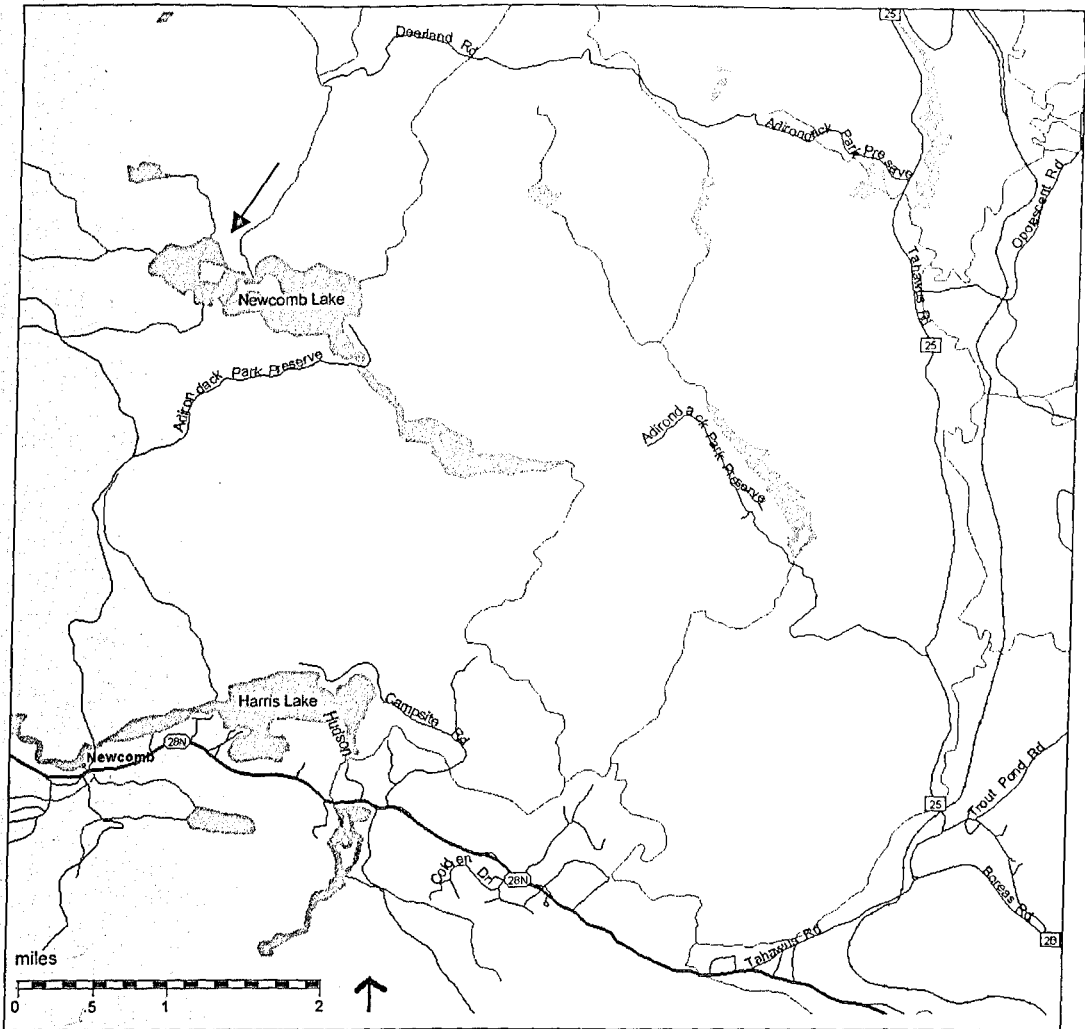
**Figure 1: Map of New York State and region**  
 (Microsoft Streets and Trips 2002 software)



**Figure 2: Location of Adirondack Park within New York State**



**Figure 3: Location of site within Adirondack State Park**

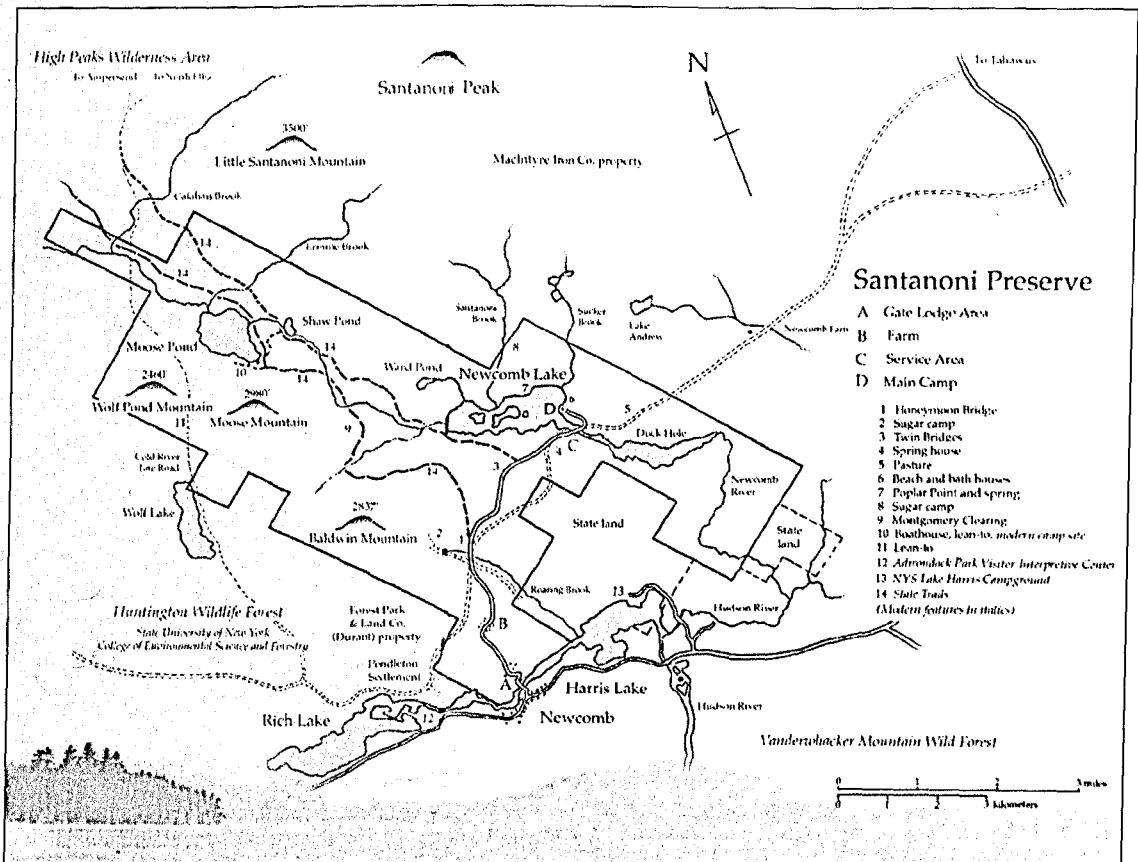


**Figure 4: Map of region near Newcomb, NY**

Map illustrates roadways and two paths with which to develop access to the site. To the south of the site is Adirondack Park Preserve Rd. off of route 28N. To the East of the site is Deerland Rd. off route 25. Site indicated with arrow.  
 (Microsoft Streets and Trips 2002 software)

## Site History

The selected site on Newcomb Lake is located within the 12,900 acre Santanoni Preserve, part of the state-owned Adirondack Forest Preserve. The Camp Santanoni Historic Area is comprised of three groupings of buildings including a Gate Lodge, Farm, Main Camp as well as carriage roads; Camp Santanoni is a National Historic Landmark.

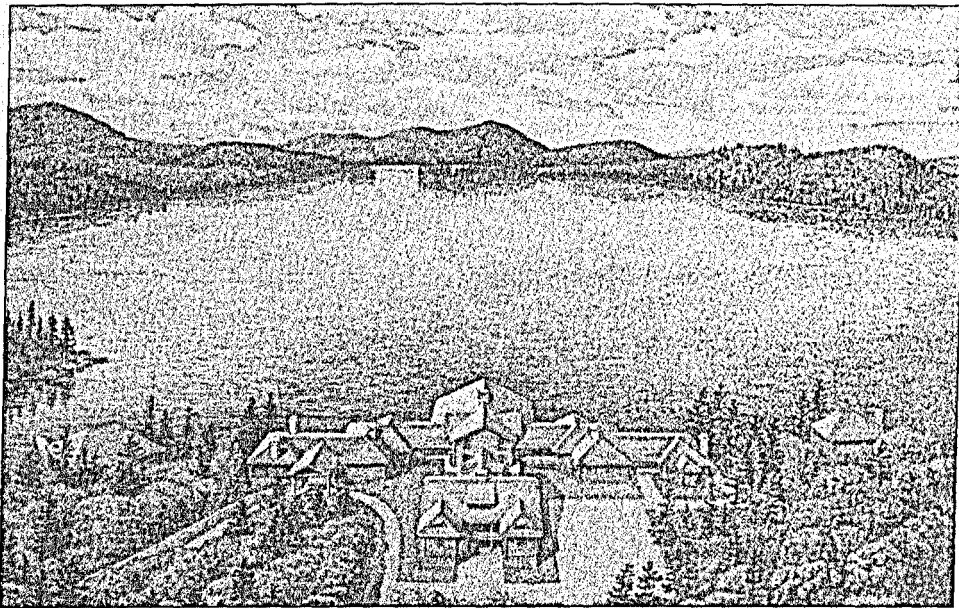


**Figure 5: Map of Santanoni Preserve**

(Engel, Robert, Howard Kirshenbaum, and Paul Malo, Santanoni: From Japanese Temple to Life at an Adirondack Great Camp (Keeseville, NY: Adirondack Architectural Heritage, 2000) inside cover.)

Camp Santanoni's first owners were Robert and Anna Pruyn of Albany. The Pruyns employed architect Robert H. Robertson (1849-1914) to design a lakeside Adirondack camp. The Main Camp building was completed in 1893. Farm buildings were designed about ten years later by Edward Burnett, the leading farm designer at the time. The Gate Lodge was designed by William Delano of New York in 1905.<sup>14</sup>

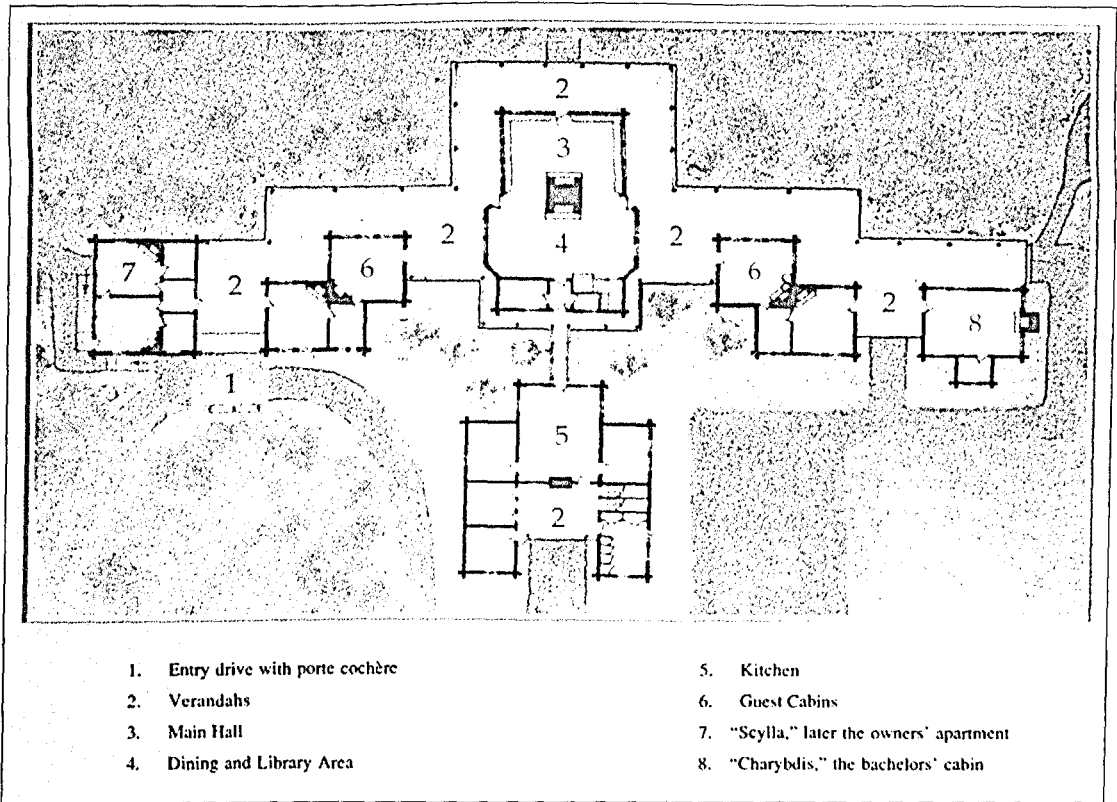
Of interest to this thesis is the architecture of the Main Camp. The siting of the building and its architectural character describe one local approach to camp architecture in this region.



**Figure 6: Aerial View of Santanoni Main Camp**

This drawing shows how the main camp of the building seems to hover just at the edge of Newcomb Lake. Also note the roofing of the structure over exterior porch spaces. The figure on the next page is a plan of the first floor. (Engel, Robert, Howard Kirshenbaum, and Paul Malo, Santanoni: From Japanese Temple to Life at an Adirondack Great Camp (Keeseville, NY: Adirondack Architectural Heritage, 2000) 57)

<sup>14</sup> Engel, Robert, Howard Kirshenbaum, and Paul Malo, Santanoni: From Japanese Temple to Life at an Adirondack Great Camp (Keeseville, NY: Adirondack Architectural Heritage, 2000).

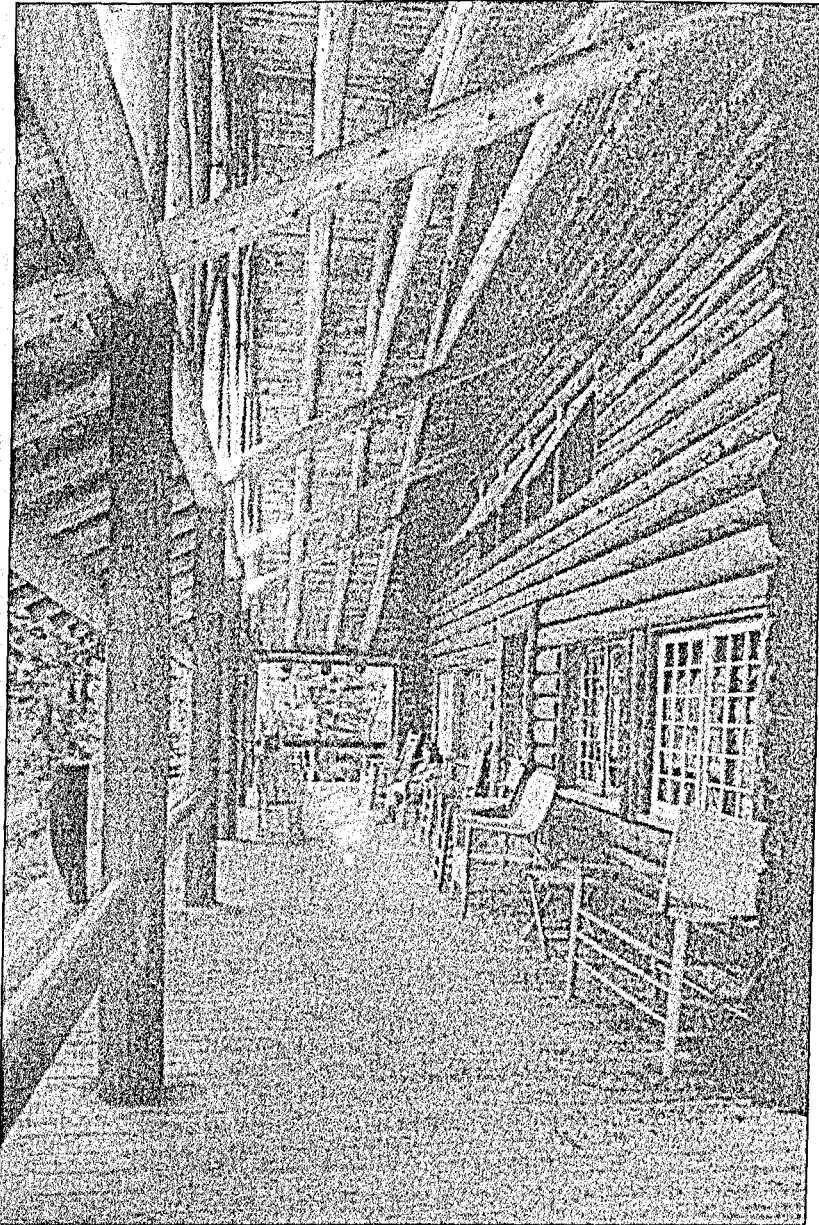


**Figure 7: Santanoni First Floor Plan**

This plan illustrates the use of exterior spaces to connect interior spaces under one roof structure.

(Engel, Robert, Howard Kirshenbaum, and Paul Malo, Santanoni: From Japanese Temple to Life at an Adirondack Great Camp (Keeseville, NY: Adirondack Architectural Heritage, 2000) 86)





**Figure 8: View of Porch, Santanoni Main Camp**

This image describes the character of the exterior porches on the Main Camp building at Santanoni. Typical of Adirondack porches is the integration of clerestory space to allow more light and air into the spaces within the building. (Engel, Robert, Howard Kirshenbaum, and Paul Malo, Santanoni: From Japanese Temple to Life at an Adirondack Great Camp (Keeseville, NY: Adirondack Architectural Heritage, 2000) 82)

## Site Analysis

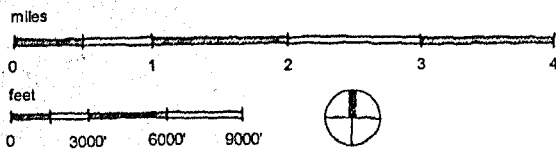
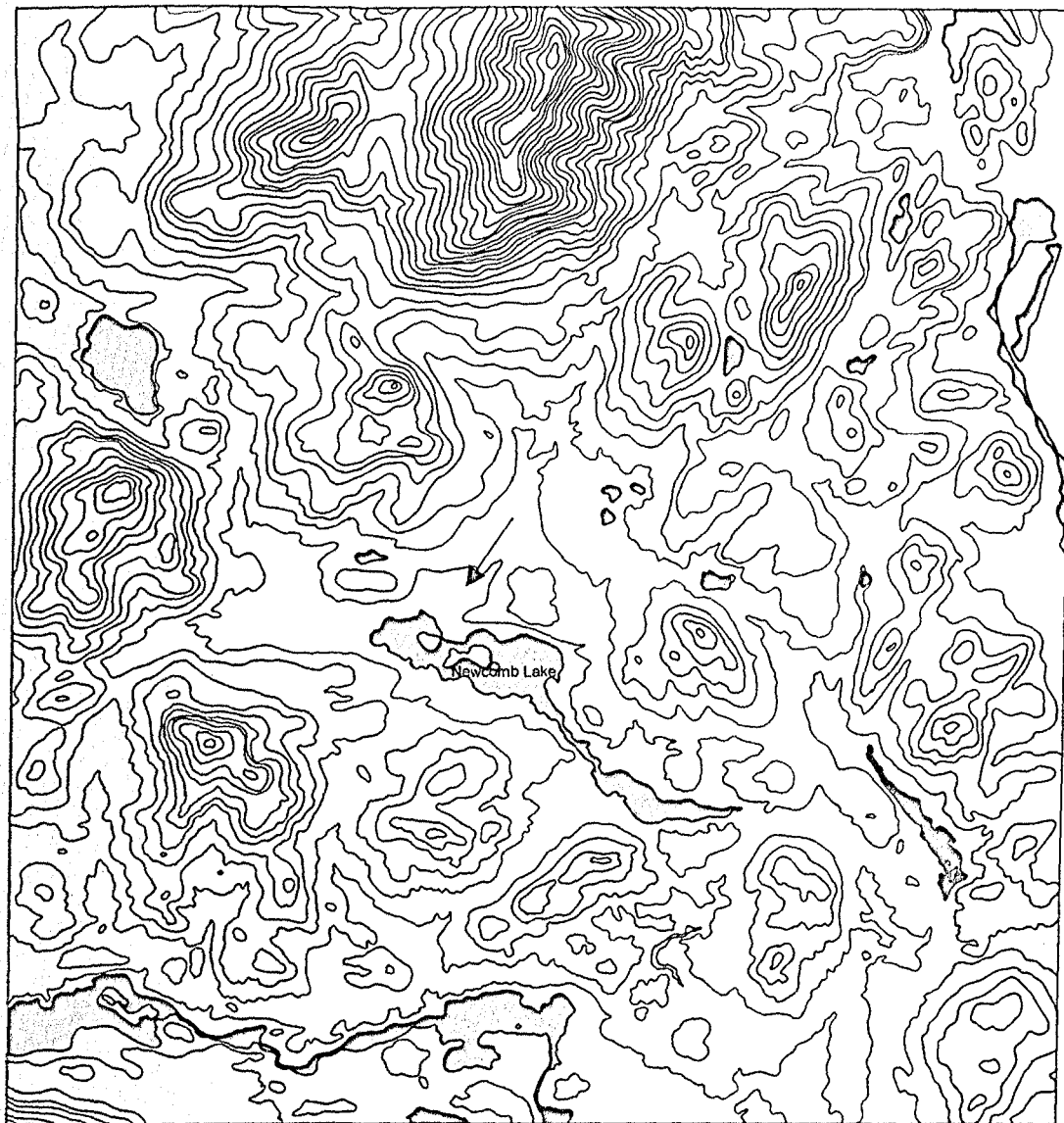
Newcomb Lake sits at the southern edge of the Santanoni Mountains within the high peaks region of Adirondack Park. The site, at approximately 1800' above sea level, is surrounded by mountains at varying elevations. Santanoni Peak is approximately five miles to the north. The mountainous terrain contributes to a plethora of streams and lakes within the region.

Because the Adirondack Mountains sit within and are adjacent to the border between the northern, predominantly coniferous boreal forest and the midcontinental mixed forest, the vegetative matter of the region is a mix of evergreen and deciduous trees.<sup>15</sup> The vegetative matter on the site on Newcomb Lake consists primarily of evergreen trees (spruce, pine, and fir) as well as mixed forest species (deciduous maple, beech, ash, and birch).

On the following pages are several drawings which illustrate site analysis information including topography, hydrology, and solar path of the region as well as more specific information relating to the site on Newcomb Lake.

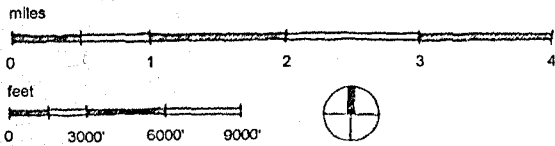
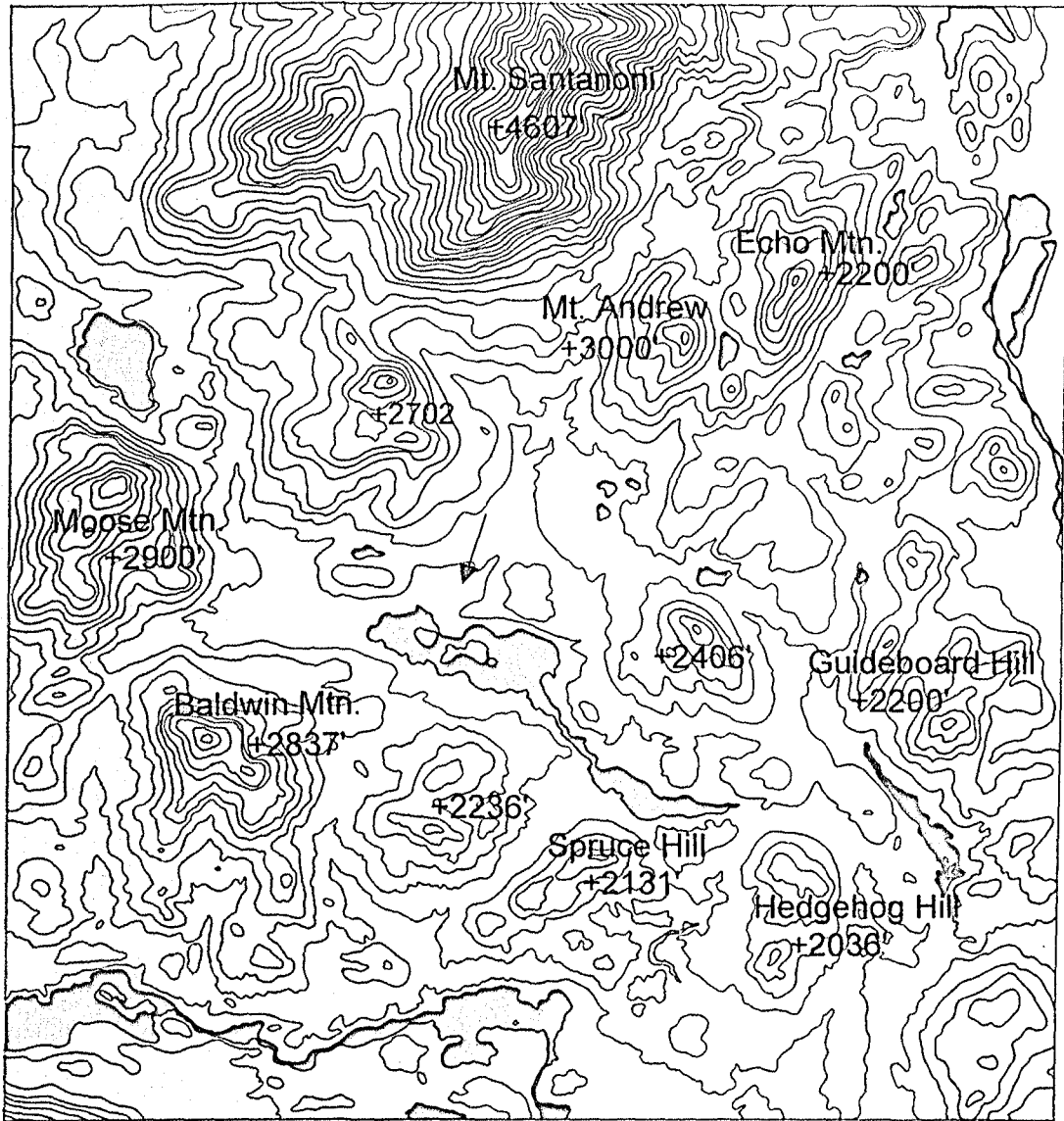
---

<sup>15</sup> Folwell, Elizabeth, The Adirondack Book: A Complete Guide. (Stockbridge, MA: Berkshire House Publishers, 1992) 449.



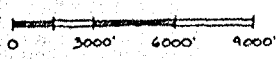
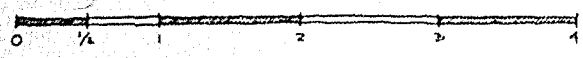
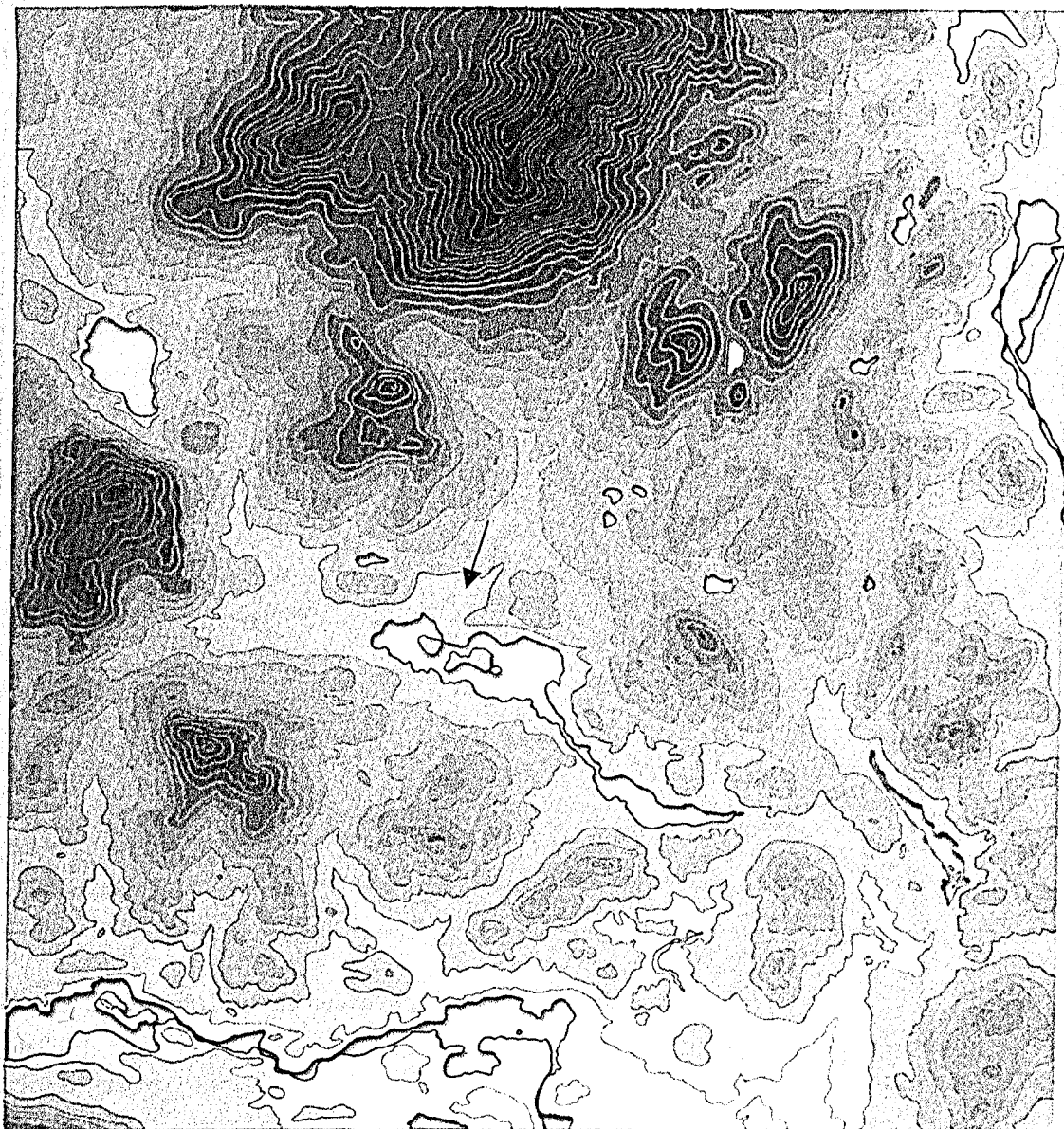
**Figure 9: Region topography and hydrology**

Site indicated with arrow. Topographic lines at 100' intervals. Note how site is surrounded by hills and within a mountainous terrain.



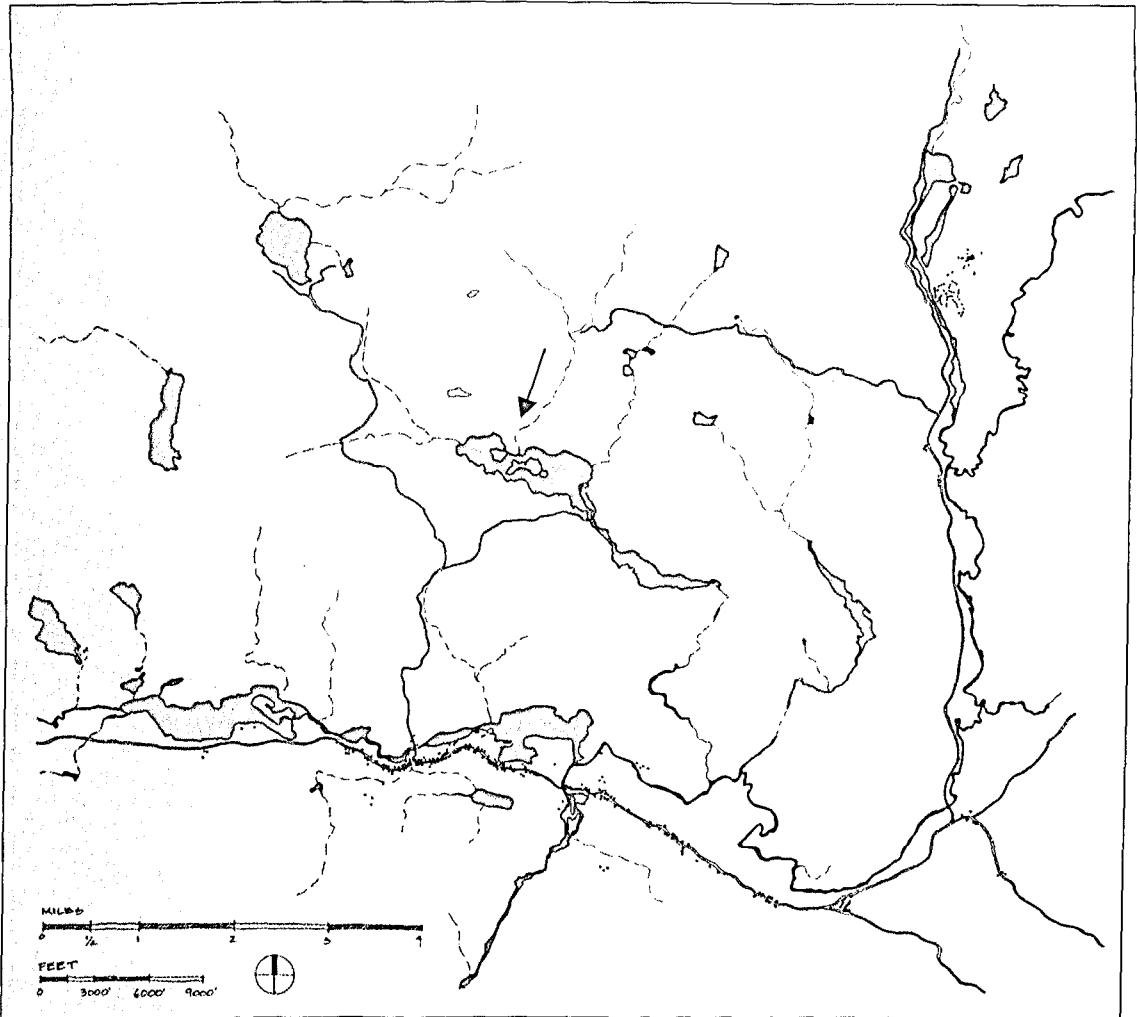
**Figure 10: Region mountains**

Topographic lines at 100' intervals. Site, at an elevation of 1800', is indicated with arrow.



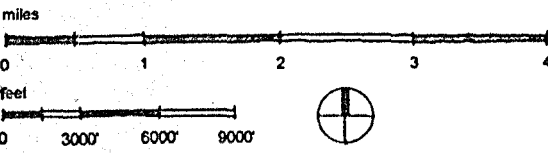
**Figure 11: Region topography, rendered**

Topographic lines at 100' intervals. Arrow indicates site. Note Mount Santanoni to the north of the site.



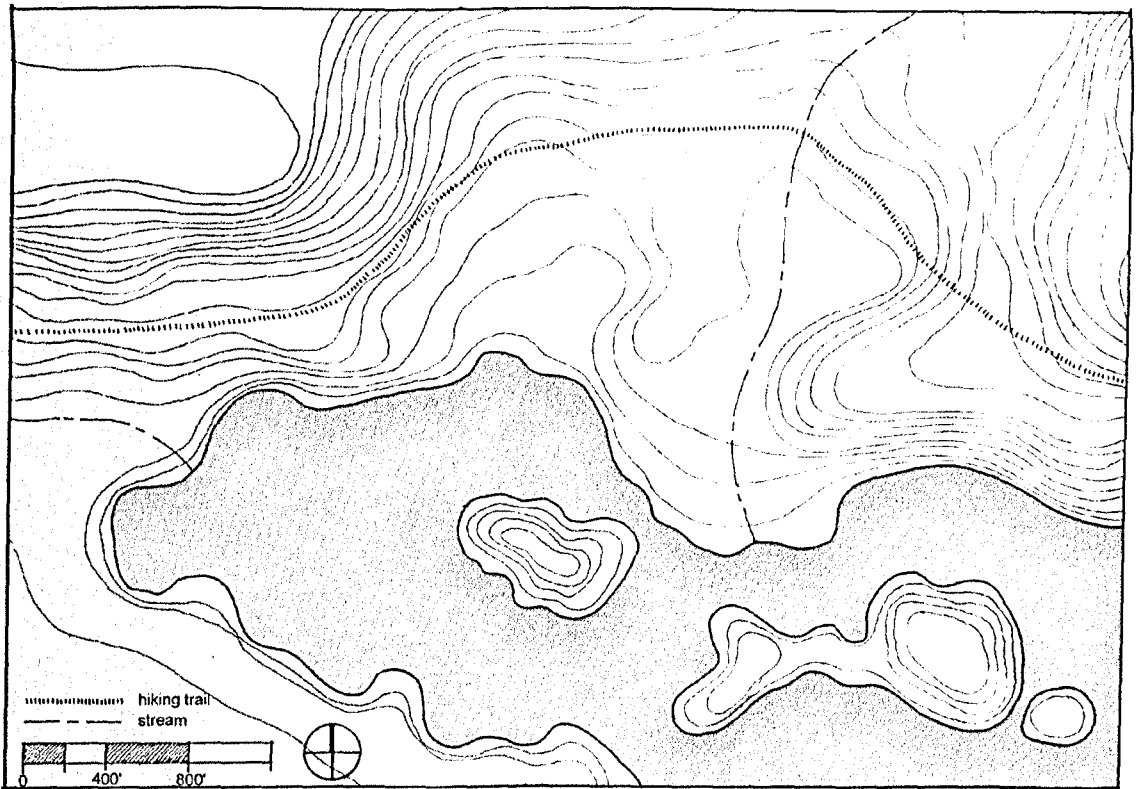
**Figure 12: Region surface hydrology, roads, and buildings**

Site indicated with arrow. Note that highest concentration of buildings are in town of Newcomb along Route 28N to the south of the site and in Tahawus to the east of the site off Route 25.



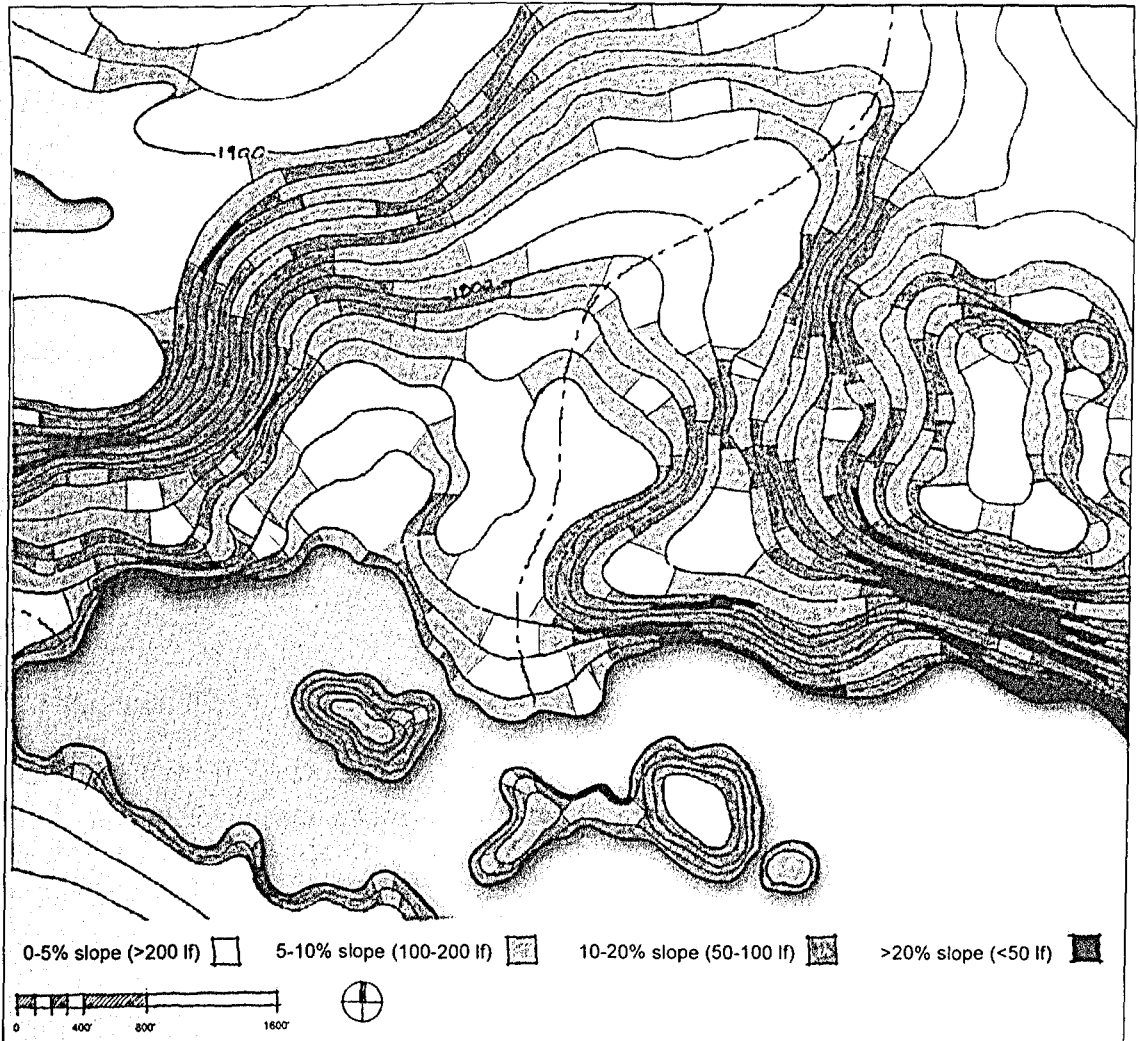
existing trails - - - - -

Figure 13: Regional hiking trails surrounding site



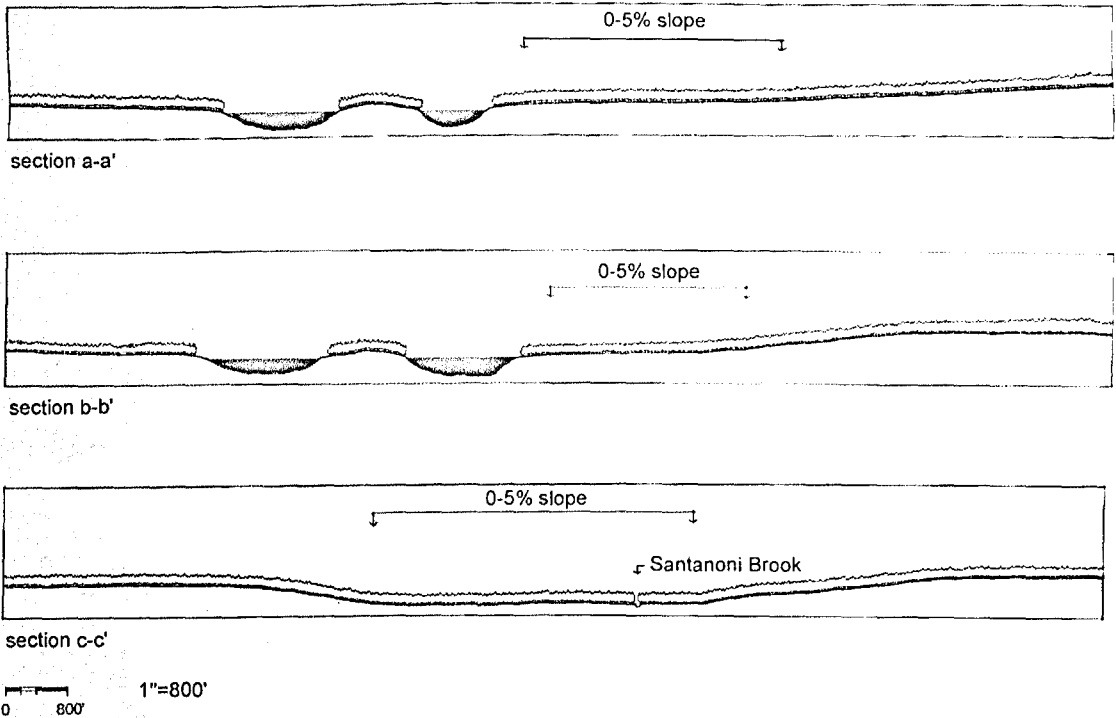
**Figure 14: Site topography, streams, water body and existing hiking trails**  
Topographic lines at 10' intervals.





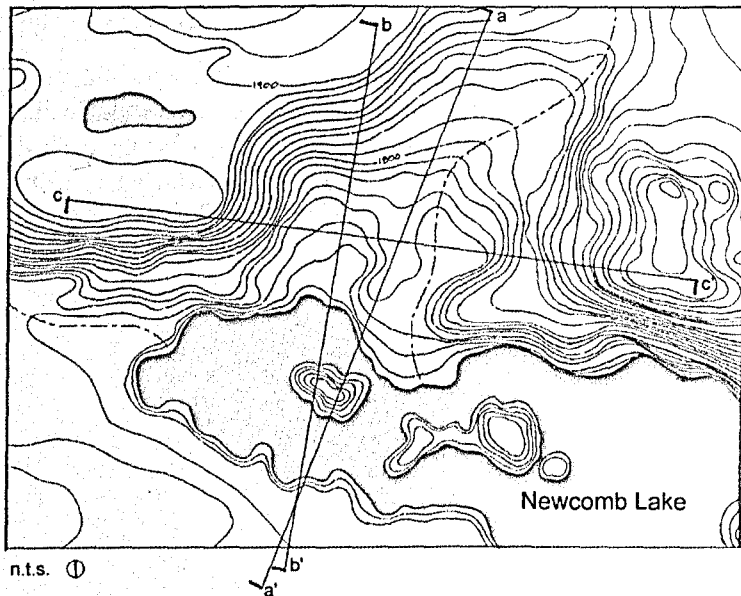
**Figure 15: Site slope analysis**

Topographic lines at 10' intervals. Slope analysis indicates site is a cradle or bowl shape; land slopes steeply away from site on the east and west. Analysis also indicates that the majority of the site is buildable (less than 20% slope). White areas indicate where land is most accessible and easily walkable (0-5% slope).

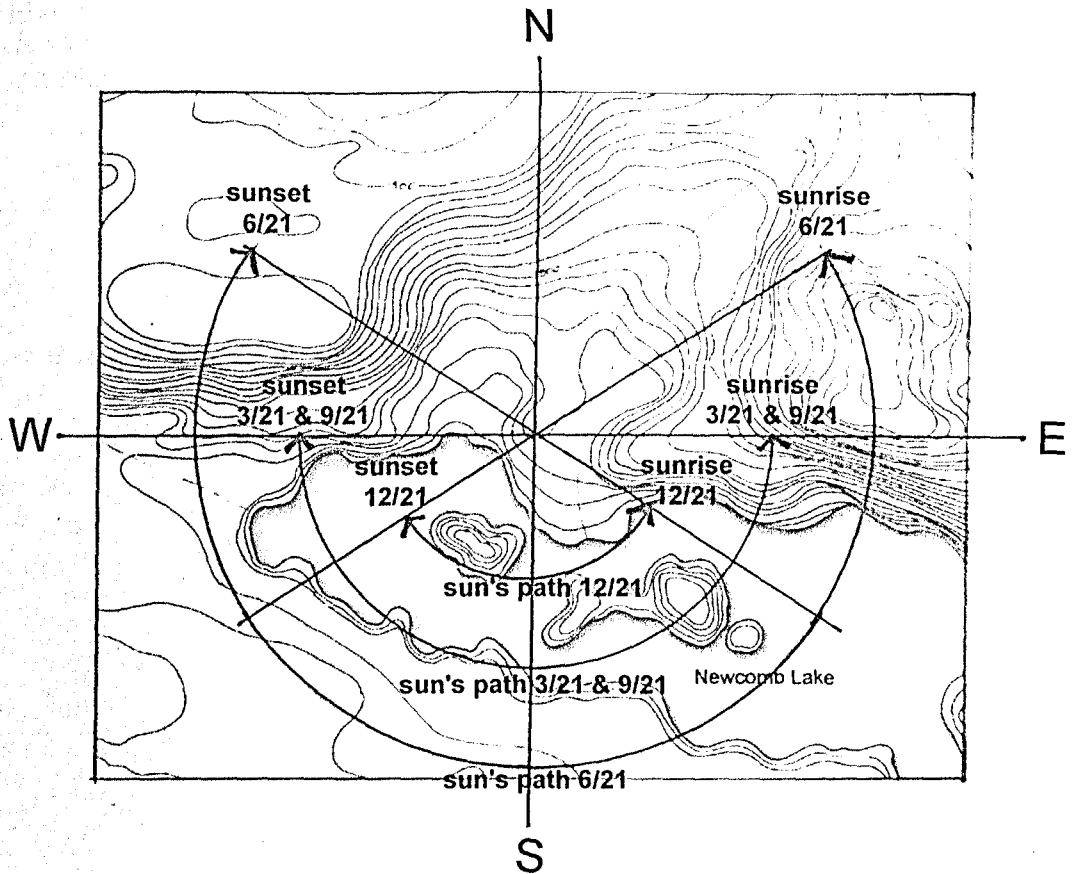


**Figure 16: Site sections**

Sections indicate cradle along a north south axis; steeper slopes to the east and west of the site. Evergreen trees and deciduous trees cover the site. 0-5% slope indicates most probable location of major buildings.



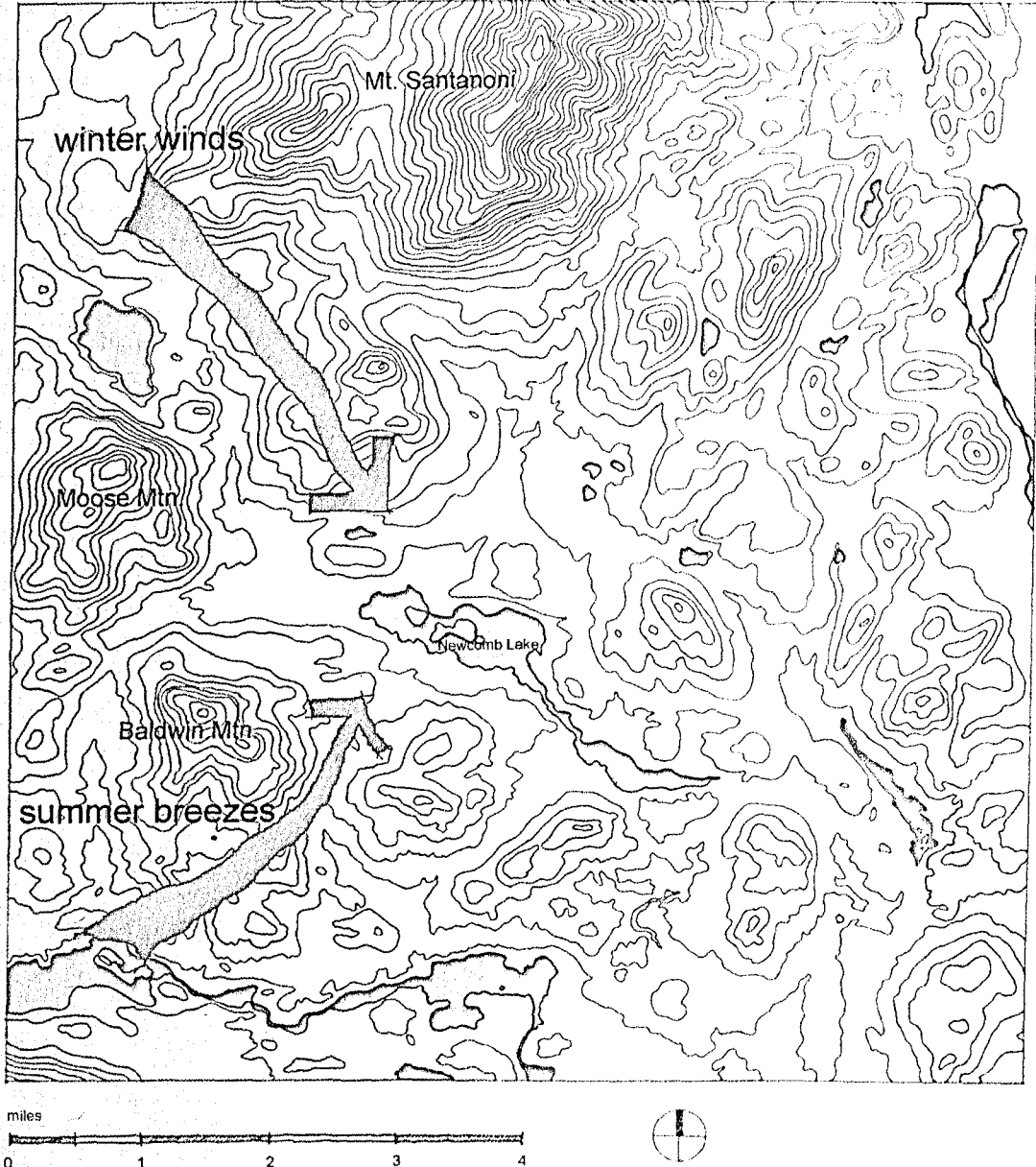
**Figure 17: Key plan indicating section cut lines**



**Figure 18: Solar path diagram for Newcomb Lake**

The site is located at approximately 44° North Latitude, a region which is primarily cold. Solar path diagram illustrates long summer days where the buildings oriented to face the water will have a great deal of southern sun exposure. In the long winter, characterized by a short southerly sun path, it will be important to take advantage of the heating rays.

*Winds are advertisements of all they touch, however much or little we may be able to read them: telling of their wanderings even by their scents alone.*  
John Muir --in The Mountains of California



**Figure 19: Prevailing winds**

In the Adirondack Mountains, prevailing winds are primarily from the west. Summer breezes come from the southwest; winter winds come from the northwest. Note that the paths of the winds are not necessarily inhibited by the surrounding mountains.

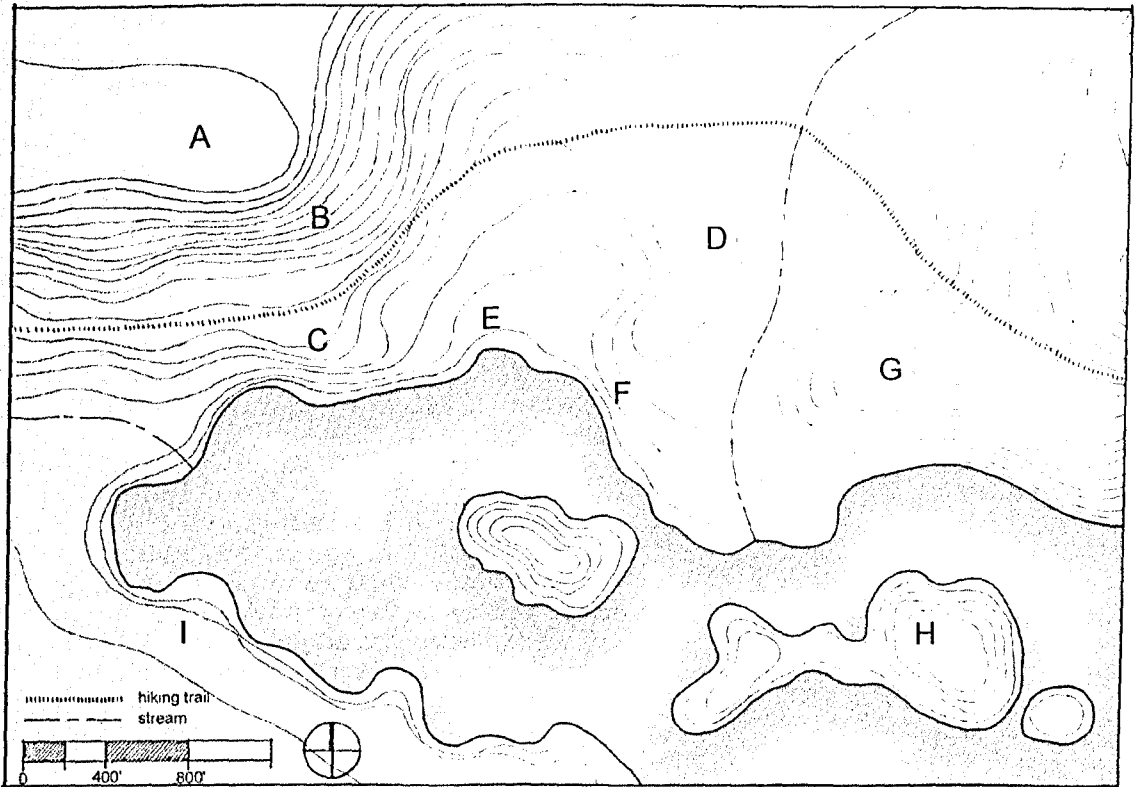
*Go to the winter woods: listen there, look, watch, and "the dead months" will give you a subtler secret than any you have yet found in the forest. Fiona Macleod in Where the Forest Murmurs*

<b>Month</b>	<b>Avg. High</b>	<b>Avg. Low</b>	<b>Avg. Precipitation</b>
Jan	25°F	0°F	2.6" snow
Feb	27°F	2°F	2.3" snow
Mar	37°F	13°F	2.8" mix
Apr	49°F	25°F	2.8" mix
May	62°F	36°F	3.5" rain
Jun	71°F	46°F	3.5" rain
Jul	76°F	51°F	3.3" rain
Aug	73°F	49°F	4.2" rain
Sep	66°F	42°F	3.9" rain
Oct	55°F	31°F	3.5" mix
Nov	41°F	23°F	3.6" snow
Dec	29°F	9°F	3.1" snow

**Figure 20: Chart of average weather conditions for Newcomb, NY**

([www.weather.com/weather/climatology/USNY1004](http://www.weather.com/weather/climatology/USNY1004))

## Site Selection Analysis



**Figure 21: Site Selection Analysis Key**

Eight sites are examined noting slope, drainage and erosion, exposure to sun and wind, relationship to the water, and whether the site offers future buildings a potentially harmonious relationship with nature. Given the intentions of this thesis to build a retreat that has a communal relationship with the natural resources on the site, it was important to determine whether these sites offered

- A. *Crest of a hill*  
0-5% slope  
multi-directional exposure to sun  
good surface drainage  
greatest exposed to winter winds from northwest  
greatest exposure to summer breezes from southwest  
180' above water = least direct experience with water  
vista experience in all directions (views of lake and distant mountains)  
least integrated into landscape  
dominant/claim hill = defeats intention of thesis to harmonize with nature

- B. *Military crest*  
 10-20% slope  
 southeastern exposure to sun  
 moderate to high potential for slope erosion  
 least exposure to winter winds from the northwest  
 moderate exposure to summer breezes from the southwest  
 120' above water = least direct relationship with water  
 views of water and mountains  
 building into hillside = meets intention of thesis to harmonize with nature
- C. *Slope just above water's edge*  
 5-20% slope (varies)  
 southern exposure to sun  
 moderate potential for slope erosion  
 least exposure to winter winds from northwest  
 greatest exposure to summer breezes from southwest  
 50' above water = more direct experience with water  
 views of water and mountains  
 building into hillside = meets intention of thesis to harmonize with nature
- D. *Flat site in the valley*  
 0-5% slope  
 potentially multidirectional exposure to sun  
 good surface drainage  
 least exposure to winds from all directions  
 40' above water = more direct relationship with water  
 views to water may be obstructed by trees, flatness of site  
 building in the forest flatlands= meets intention of thesis to harmonize with nature
- E. *Flat site on the water #1*  
 0-5% slope  
 southern exposure to sun  
 potentially wet and flooded during rains  
 moderate exposure to winter winds from northwest  
 greatest exposure to summer breezes from southwest  
 10' above water = most direct relationship with water  
 views across water and of mountains  
 views to island offer potential sense of enclosure  
 building on the water's edge = meets intention of thesis to harmonize with nature
- F. *Flat site on the water #2*  
 5-10% slope  
 southwestern exposure to sun  
 well drained  
 moderate to high exposure to winter winds from northwest  
 greatest exposure to summer breezes from southwest  
 30' above water = most direct relationship with water  
 views across water and of mountains  
 views to island offer potential sense of enclosure  
 building on the water's edge = meets intention of thesis to harmonize with nature

- G. *Saddle site*  
 0-5% slope  
 multidirectional exposure to sun  
 good surface drainage  
 greatest exposure to winter winds from northwest  
 greatest exposure to summer breezes from southwest  
 90' above water = least direct relationship with water  
 vista experience in all directions but East (views of lake and distant mountains)  
 less integrated into landscape  
 potentially dominant/claim hill = defeats intention of thesis to harmonize with nature
- H. *Island site*  
 5-20% slope (varies); some areas also 0-5% slope  
 multidirectional exposure to sun  
 moderate to high potential for slope erosion  
 greatest exposure to winter winds from northwest  
 greatest exposure to summer breezes from southwest  
 30' above water = more direct relationship with water (water surrounds site)  
 most remote; most retreated  
 views in all directions (views of lake and distant mountains)  
 building on the water's edge = meets intention of thesis to harmonize with nature  
 building on island = claim island? =defeats intention of thesis?
- I. *Flat site on water #3*  
 0-5% slope  
 northeastern exposure to sun  
 potentially wet and swampy during rains  
 greatest exposure to winter winds from northwest  
 moderate exposure to summer breezes from southwest  
 30' above water = more direct relationship with water  
 views across water and of surrounding mountains  
 building on the water's edge = meets intention of thesis to harmonize with nature

Out of the eight, only I, G, and A are inappropriate given the intentions of this thesis project and a desire to cause less soil erosion and a pleasant experience with the weather. Sites B, C, D, and H have been chosen to develop schemes for because they are unique enough from one another that a healthy variety of schemes may be developed.



## Precedent Analysis

The precedents described here are just some of the many buildings and sites the author has looked at and will consider when designing the Writers' Retreat. The precedents selected for inclusion here vary in terms of program, site organization, scale, and architectural expression. They have been researched and analyzed with the intention of bringing ideas to the program, site development, and material character of this thesis project. Attention to how each built work relates to the natural environment in which it sits was of particular interest.

## Precedent 1: Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, Deer Isle, ME

Haystack School is a crafts school for adults in mid-coast Maine was designed by Edward Larrabee Barnes in 1962. Haystack School is located approximately 500 miles from New York City and 250 miles from Boston. The School hosts two- and three-week sessions in the summer, spring, and fall. Each session averages approximately fifty students in enrollment. Students take classes in pottery, sculpture, metalwork, woodwork, glassblowing, drawing, basketry, and photography. Participants take classes Monday through Friday, and the studios are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Evening slide lectures, performances, and presentations are integrated into the workshop sessions.<sup>16</sup> Student and faculty live, eat, and work at the School.

The age of the School's clientele, the operation of its workshops, as well as the picturesque setting in which the camp sits make it a particularly appropriate precedent consider when developing the Writing Workshop and Retreat Center's program and site organization.

The school is organized like a village with a "main 'street' leading to the sea, dining hall and offices at the top, studios and decks branching out on side streets, and clusters of living units nestled in the woods. The design provides separation for work and living."<sup>17</sup> Functions are therefore organized with public spaces near the top where they can be serviced more easily, and dormitory cabins farther down the slope for privacy. There is also an inferred correlation

---

<sup>16</sup> [www.haystack-mtn.org/](http://www.haystack-mtn.org/)

<sup>17</sup> Barnes, Edward Larrabee, Edward Larrabee Barnes Architect (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1994) 70.

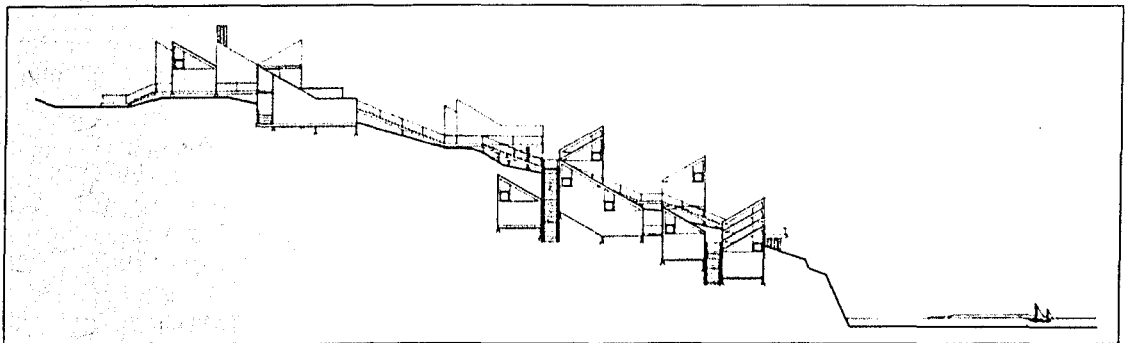
between the location of public spaces/inland/Man and private spaces/ocean/woods/Nature. Finally, the buildings are arranged on the slope of the hill using platform paths for circulation; this allowed Barnes to build lightly on the land and directly on the hill rather than on top of it or at the base of it.

Programmatically, building function is reflected in the size of the buildings. Barnes employs two building types: sleeping cabins and studios (the dining hall is a studio of cooking craft). All the buildings are roofed with the slope of the land, either 45-degrees pointing the roof up the hill or 45-degrees oriented down it. With the exception of the dining hall, all the workshop/studio roofs point north to allow glare-free light through ribbon windows. The windows of the sleeping cabins are on the south, east, and west sides to allow views of the ocean and up into the trees while maintaining privacy (pathways are to the north of the buildings).



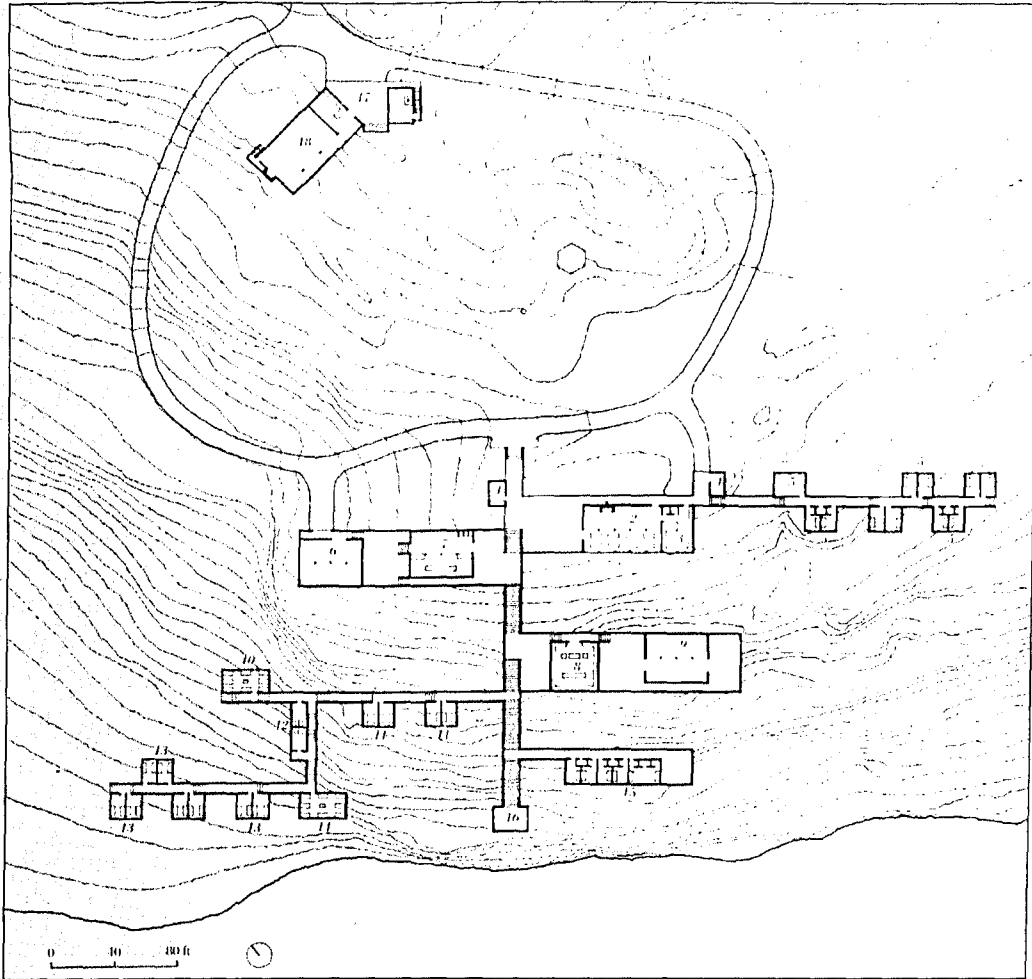
**Figure 22: Precedent 1 – Aerial view of Haystack Mountain Crafts School**

This image illustrates the layout of the buildings within the wooded setting. (Barnes, Edward Larrabee, Edward Larrabee Barnes Architect (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1994))



**Figure 23: Precedent 1 – Site section**

This section, as well as the plan on the next page, illustrate how the buildings are organized along a central axial spine with other circulation branching off in cross-axes. The buildings cascade down hillside from entry (high) to ocean shore (low). (Barnes, Edward Larrabee, Edward Larrabee Barnes Architect (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1994))



**Figure 24: Precedent 1 – Site Plan, Haystack Mountain Crafts School**

1. Office
2. Dining hall
3. Kitchen
4. Service shed
5. Luxury cabins (added later; not part of original scheme)
6. Carpentry shop
7. Pottery shop
8. Graphic shop
9. Weaving shop
10. Women's dormitory
11. Women's cabins
12. Bathrooms
13. Men's cabins
14. Men's dormitory
15. Faculty cabins
16. Outlook to sea
17. Visitors center: breezeway
18. Visitors center: gallery (added later; not part of original scheme)

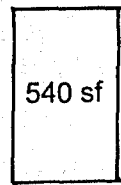
(Barnes, Edward Larrabee, Edward Larrabee Barnes Architect (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1994))

<b>Living Spaces</b>	<b>#spaces</b>	<b>#people per space</b>	<b>sq. footage</b>
Dormitories	2	8	540 sf
Sleeping cabins <sup>18</sup>	10	2-4	360 sf
Bathrooms	1	8 stalls	330sf
<b>Public Space</b>			
Workshops	3	12-15 with equipment	1200 sf
Graphic workshop	1	12-15 with equipment	900 sf
Dining hall	1	55-60	1500 sf
Visitors center	1		2775 sf
Kitchen	1		600 sf
Office	1		216 sf
Shed	1		180 sf
<b>Exterior Spaces</b>			
Visitors breezeway			900 sf
Outlook to sea			450 sf
Space adj. cabins	1		500 sf
Sm. spaces adj. studios	2		800 sf
Lg. spaces adj. studios	3		1200 sf
Space adj. dining hall	1		1600 sf
<b>Total square footage excluding exterior spaces</b>			<b>14781 sf</b>
<b>Total square footage including exterior spaces</b>			<b>21581 sf</b>
Distance from parking to entry			400 ft.
Distance of central axial path			240 ft.
Distance between sleeping cabins			20 ft.

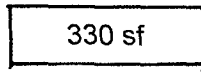
Figure 25: Precedent 1 – Program tabulation, Haystack School

<sup>18</sup> Two sleeping cabins have private baths. All the other cabins use the central bathroom.

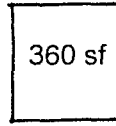
Living Spaces



dormitories  
(8 people)

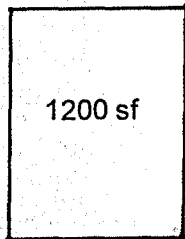


bathrooms

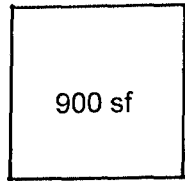


sleeping cabins  
(2 to 4 people)

Public Spaces



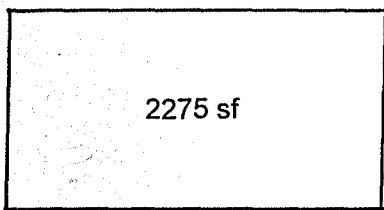
workshops  
(#6, 7, 9)



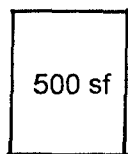
workshop #8



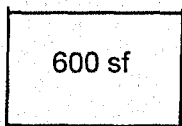
dining hall



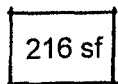
visitors center



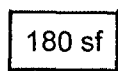
shed



kitchen

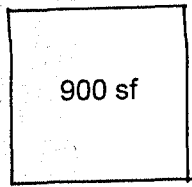


office

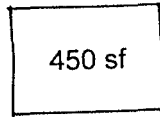


✂ scale figure

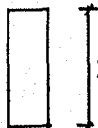
Exterior Spaces



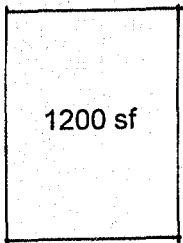
visitors center  
breezeway



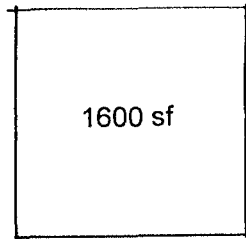
outlook to sea



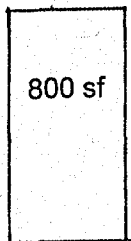
width/distance of path  
between sleeping cabins



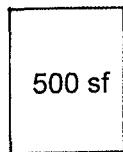
lg. space  
adjacent  
workshops



space adjacent  
dining hall



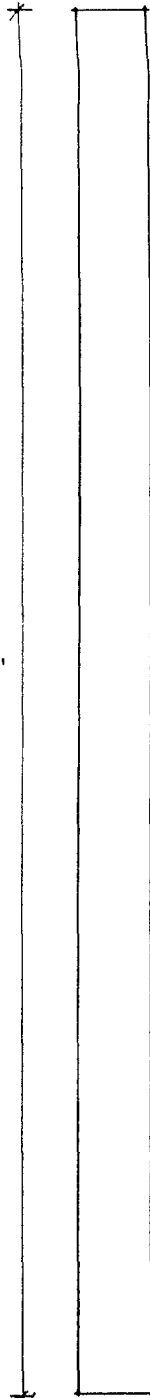
sm. space  
adjacent  
workshops



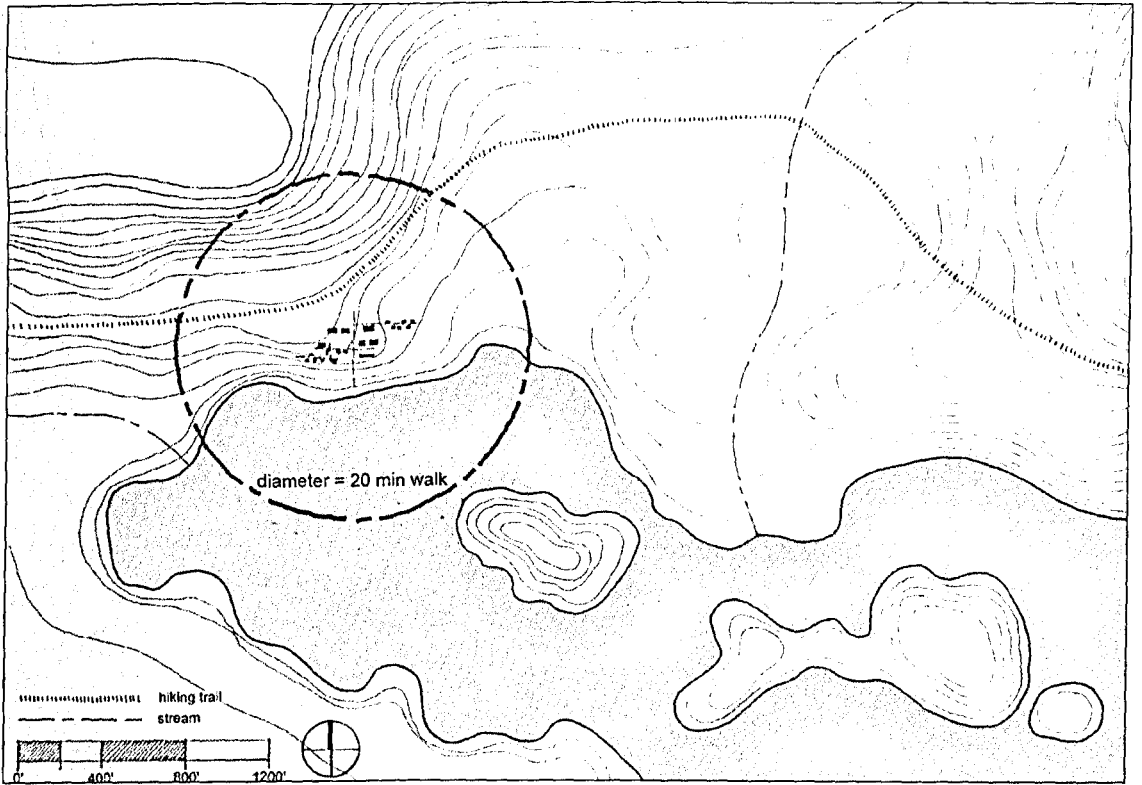
space adjacent  
sleeping cabins

width/distance  
of central path

240'

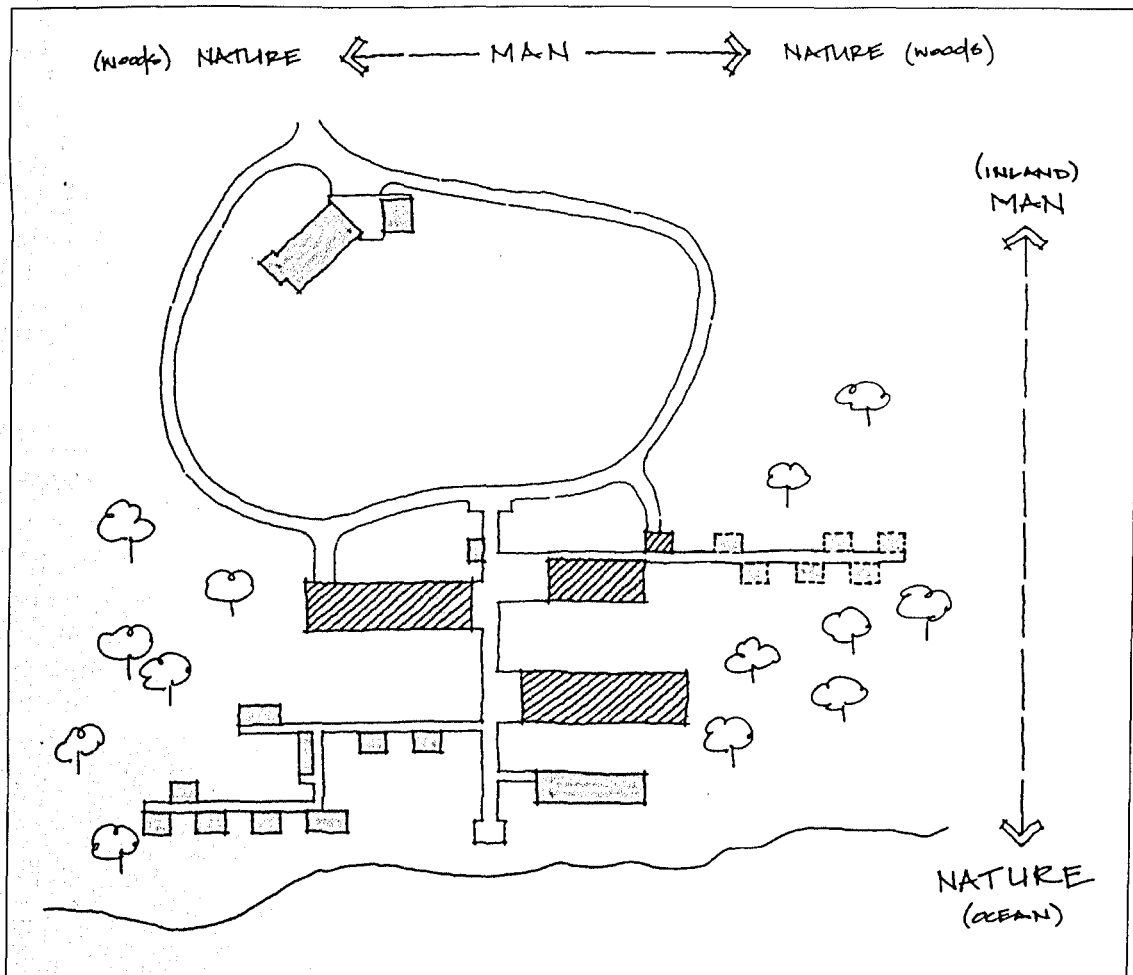






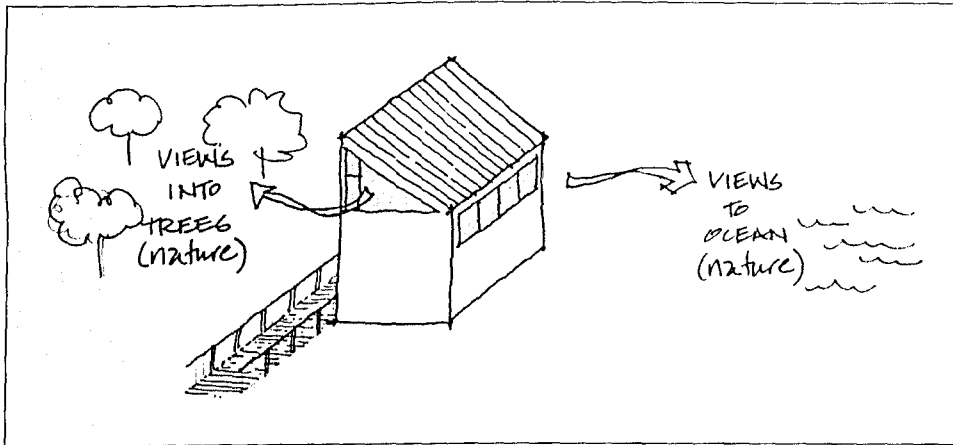
**Figure 26: Precedent 1 – Haystack placed on thesis project site**

This diagram illustrates the application of Haystack’s approach to program organization via its axial site plan onto a slope within the bounds of the thesis project site. The diagram also shows the relative size of the general site of the thesis project.



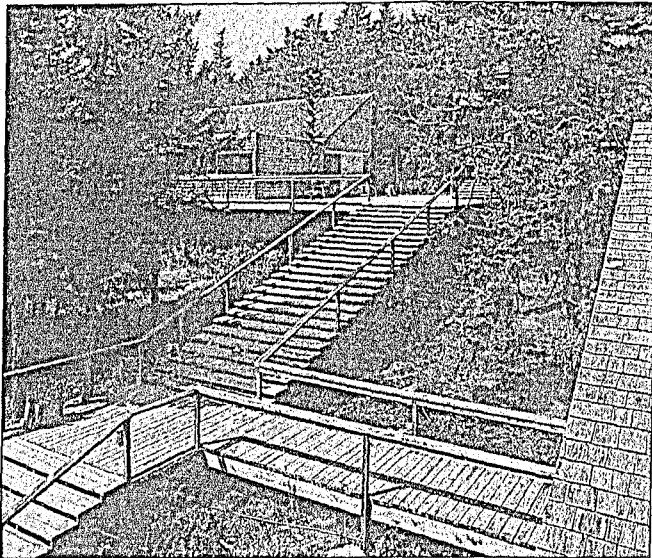
**Figure 27: Precedent 1 – Diagram of site**

This diagram illustrates the correlation between the function of the buildings and where they are located according to a Man-Nature dichotomy. The public buildings (hatched) are located near the center and top of the site, closer in to the clearing of the site against the 'wild' of the woods adjacent to the site and inland from the ocean. The sleeping quarters are located on the edges of the site and further down near the sea. (The luxury cottages located on the right and dashed in this diagram were added later and were not a part of the original scheme.)



**Figure 28: Precedent 1 – Diagram of sleeping cabin**

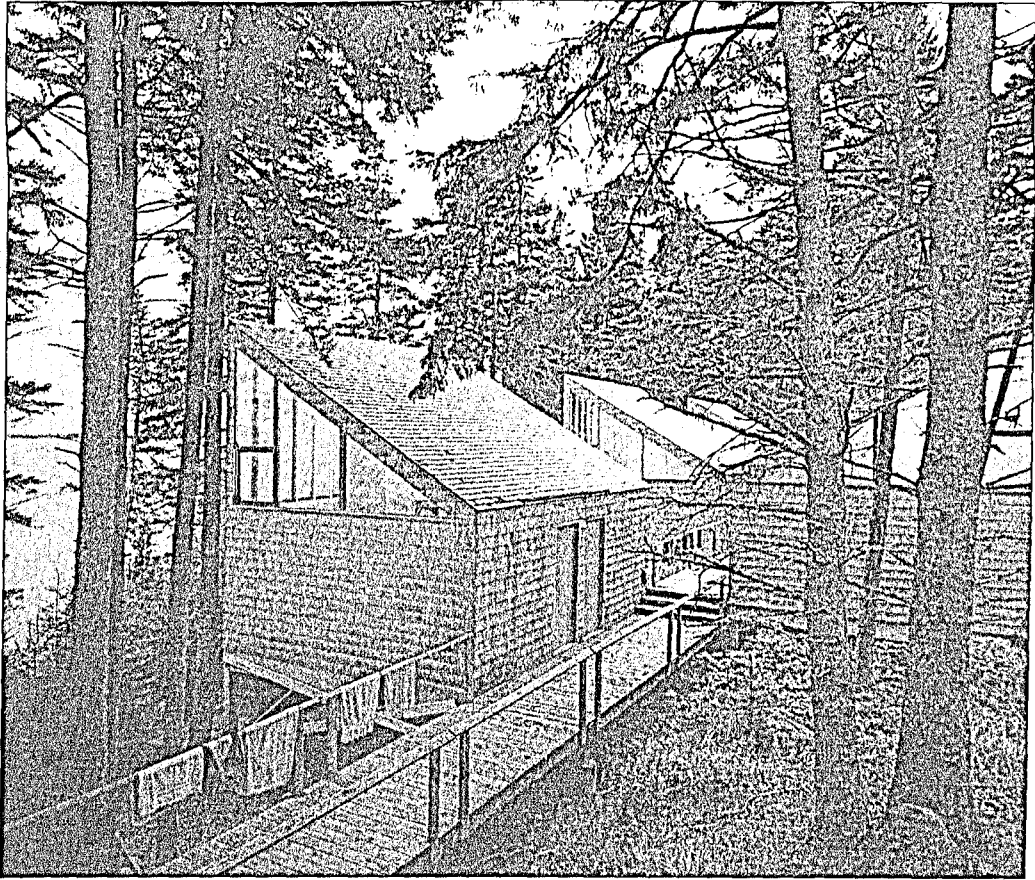
This diagram illustrates further the correlation between the spaces which offer a private experience and their proximity to Nature. The views for the inhabitants of the sleeping cabins are of the ocean or of the trees; students never look out their windows and see the urban condition of the site's village and public studio spaces.



**Figure 29: Precedent 1 – View of built paths**

This image illustrates Barnes' use of wood platform/deck pathways between buildings. The lightness of the material and undisturbed character of the land immediately adjacent to the paths shows a particularly unobtrusive approach to settling on the site. The buildings and paths seem to rest lightly on the land and potentially allow for a more direct relationship for student and teachers with nature.

(Barnes, Edward Larrabee, Edward Larrabee Barnes Architect (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1994))

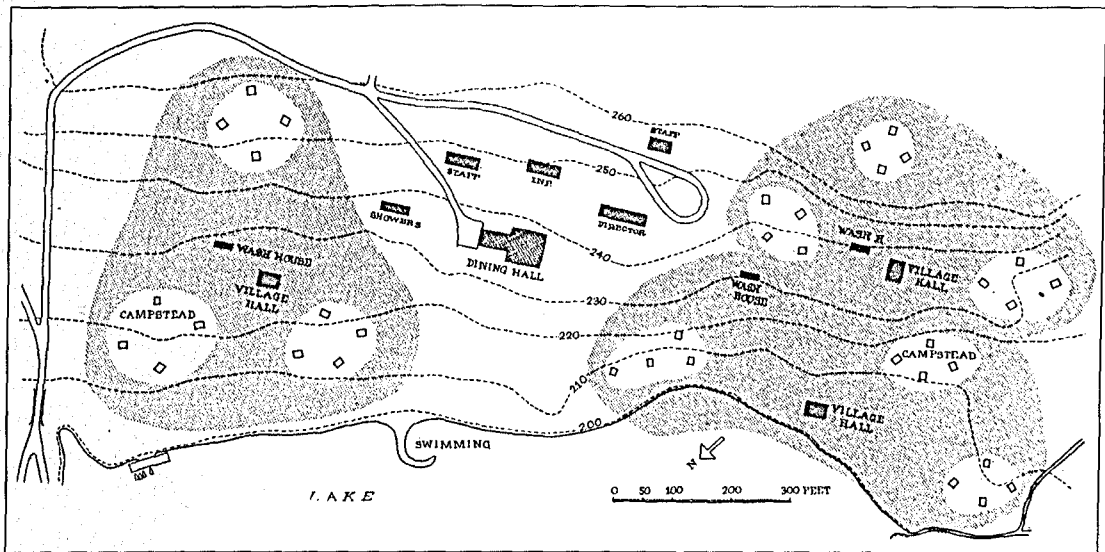


**Figure 30: Precedent 1 – View of built paths adjacent to sleeping cabins**

(Barnes, Edward Larrabee, Edward Larrabee Barnes Architect (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1994))

## Precedents 2 & 3: Camp Bliss & Camp Hayden, Fishkill, NY

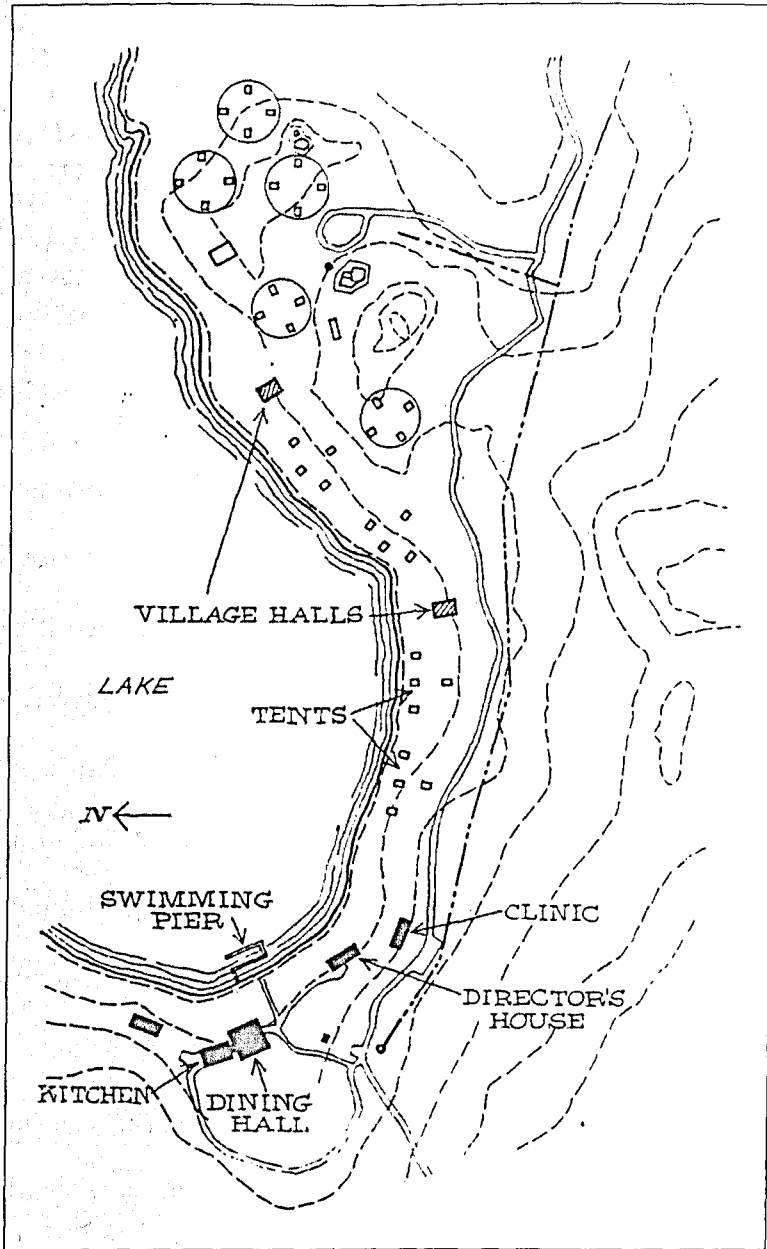
Camp Bliss and Camp Hayden were designed by Edward Larrabee Barnes in the early 1960's. The site plans are of interest to this thesis. Each camp is organized as a conglomeration of residential villages. "Tents are scattered around meeting halls to form a handful of village groups, which in turn are placed around a lake to share a common dining hall and infirmary."<sup>19</sup>



**Figure 31: Precedent 2 – Camp Bliss site plan**

Site plan illustrates residential clusters surrounding a wash house and main "village hall." The public spaces are then centralized within the residential "villages." The most public spaces are at the center of site plan; private spaces are on the periphery. (Architectural Forum, (July 1962))

<sup>19</sup> Architectural Forum, (July 1962), 93.



**Figure 32: Precedent 3 – Camp Hayden site plan**

Site plan illustrates residential clusters organized near three village halls. The most public spaces are located at the far edge of one of the residential area; an 'axis' runs the length of this portion of the lake. Public areas are separated from private areas by being at separate ends of this axis. (Architectural Forum, (July 1962))

Precedent 4: Darwin D. Martin House and Garden, Buffalo, NY

*At last, we know not what it is to live in the open air, and our lives are domestic in more senses than we think. From the hearth to the field is a great distance. It would be well perhaps if we were to spend more of our days and nights without an obstruction between us and the celestial bodies, if the poet did not speak so much from under a roof, or the saint dwell so long. Birds do not sing in caves, nor do doves cherish their innocence in dovecots.* Henry David Thoreau<sup>20</sup>

In *Walden*, author Henry David Thoreau focuses much of his discussion of his cabin on its transparency and intimate relationship with the natural world over descriptions of its sheltering qualities. He scorns a hypercivilized distinction between inside and out with his statement, "Birds do not sing in caves." In fact, he lives in the "slightly clad" cabin for four months before he plasters the gaps in the walls. "I did not need to go out doors to take air, for the atmosphere within had lost none of its freshness. It was not so much within doors as behind a door where I sat, even in the rainiest weather." Thoreau's favorite space, his "best room," is "the pine wood behind [his] house."<sup>21</sup>

It was not until approximately fifty years later, when Frank Lloyd Wright began designing houses, that American houses began more intentionally dissolving into the outdoors. Wright developed an architectural kits of parts with which he designed structures; it is this kit of parts, including pier-inspired walls, large openings, and roofs which stretched past the vertical pieced-together-planes, which illustrate how his buildings meet the landscape. Although these structures meet a domesticated landscape, they are dissolved structures; they

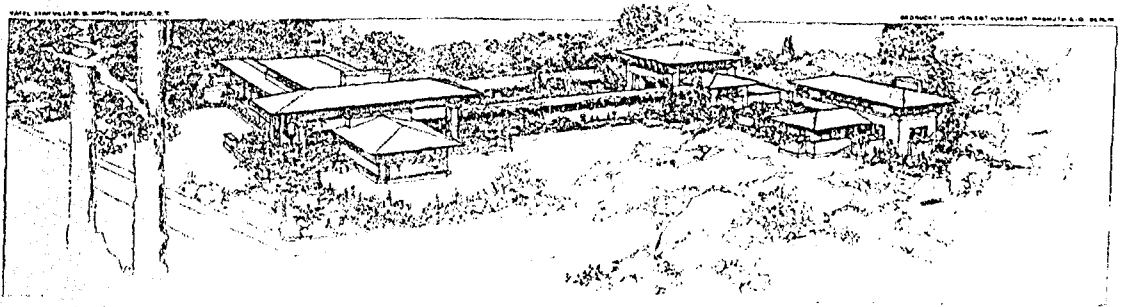
---

<sup>20</sup> Thomas, Owen, Ed., Walden and Civil Disobedience: Henry David Thoreau (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1966) 19.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 95.

are transparent. Hence, if they sit in a parking lot, garden, or natural wooded landscape, they promote a harmonious relationship between the spaces 'inside' and the outdoors. Wright's architectural language applied blurs the boundary between built and unbuilt because physical enclosure is less apparent.

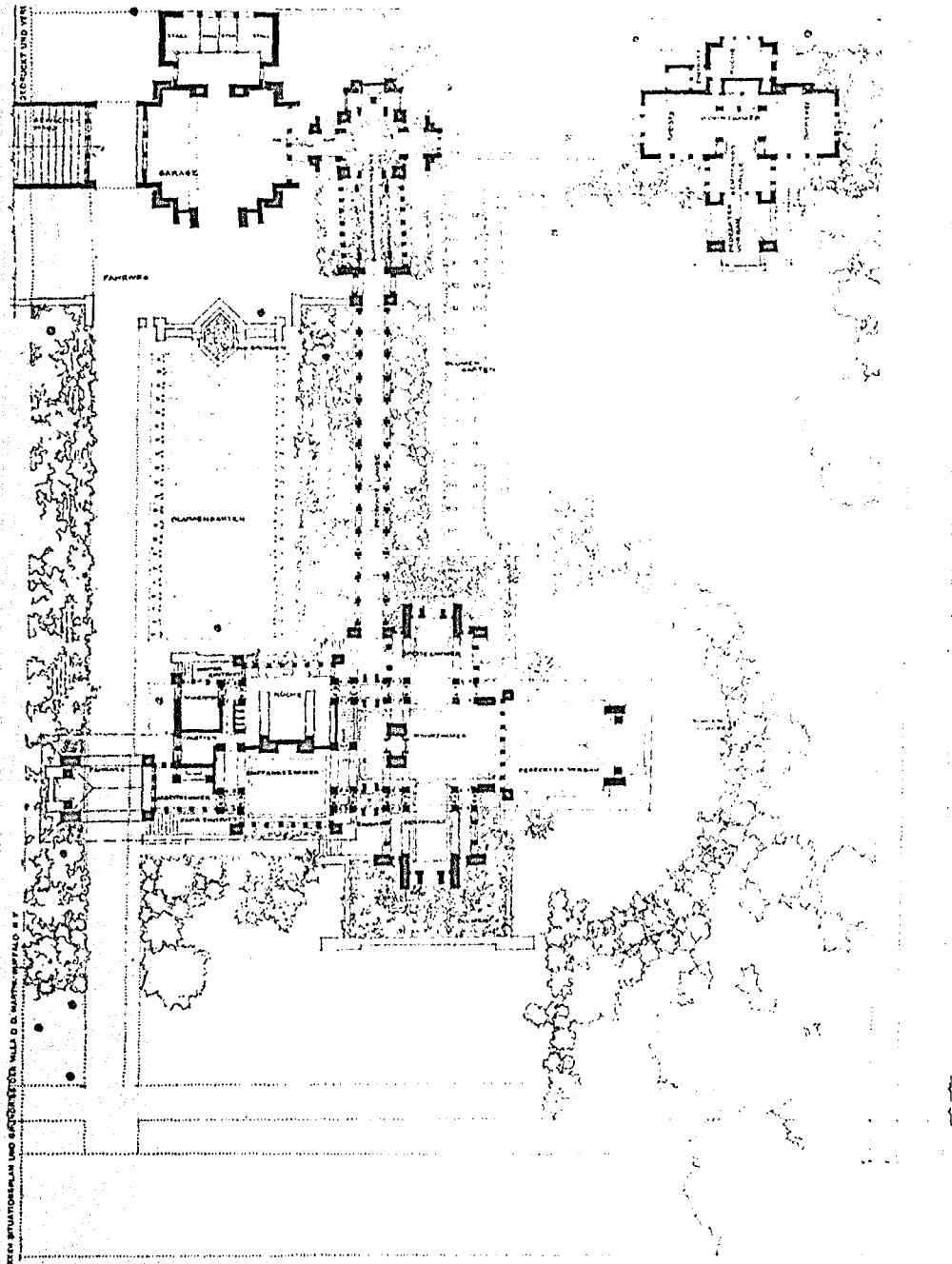
Built between 1903-1905, the Martin House and Garden in Buffalo, New York is a good example of Wright's, then developing, architectural vocabulary.



**Figure 33: Precedent 4 – Birds Eye View of Martin House**

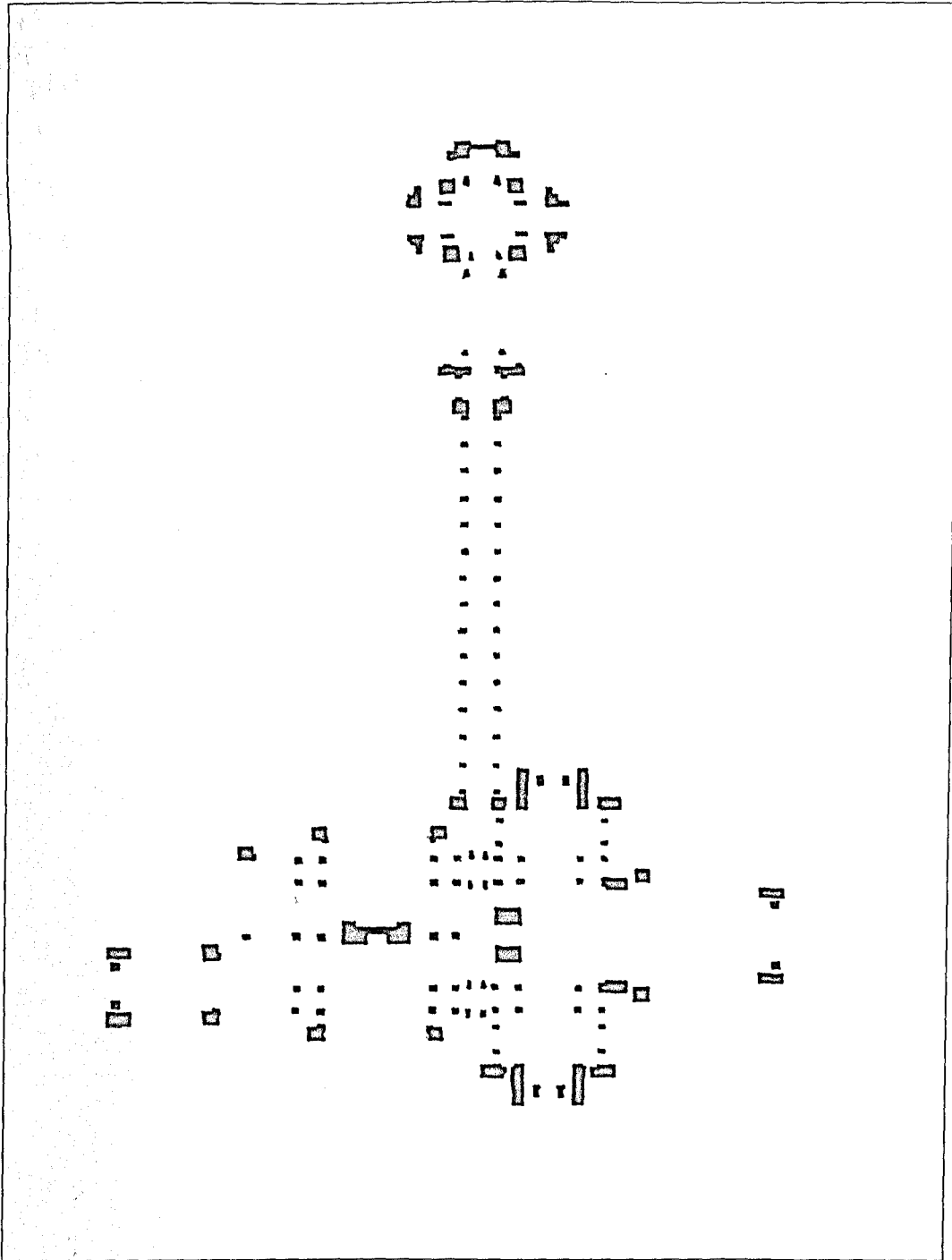
The bird's eye drawing illustrates Wright's unfolding massing; his building stretches into the garden physically meeting it and blurring the transition from built mass to vegetation. Wright also achieves this blurring with his approach to wall-making. Using trellises and piers for walls, the Martin house is a punctured series of walls, as if large sections of these vertical partitions were taken away and replaced by piers and window frames. In fact, all the vertical planes are transparent; the only truly opaque planes are the horizontal: the plinth upon which the house rests and through which the house meets the ground and the roof planes.





**Figure 34: Precedent 4 – Plan of Martin House and Garden**

This drawing is included to give readers a sense of how the spaces are organized in the house. Something interesting to note, although not necessarily relevant to the goals of this thesis project, is how the architectural vocabulary of the building meet the architectural vocabulary of the garden. Wherever a pier meets the outdoors, there is vegetation to transition from architectural space to garden space.



**Figure 35: Precedent 4 – Diagram of Martin House**

This diagram illustrates the articulation of the vertical planes as piers and the lack of enclosure his architectural system suggests. Indeed, an individual inside his building would feel enclosed mostly by the roof, according to this diagram. Although his transparent walls obviously enclosed his buildings, this diagram

illustrates how effective his roofs are at creating places safe from the elements and outside world. It is interesting to think that one can create a building that feels safe and yet still feels transparent to the outdoors.

## Precedent 5: Cabin, Catoctin Mountains, Maryland

Finished in 1996, this “rustic retreat” is useful to examine because the intended experience of BCJ’s clients bears similarity to the intentions of the proposed buildings of this thesis project. Although located in the Catoctin Mountains in Maryland, Bohlin’s clients “expressed a fondness for Adirondack architecture and a desire for heavy timber construction” when they commissioned the firm to design this large cabin. “BCJ responded with wood-framed pavilions set on a rocky outcropping in the forest and casually organized along a rambling log wall.”<sup>22</sup>

Although the house is but one building set in a wooded landscape, its siting, use of materials, and layout illustrate a building that is meant to merge with its natural context. It is mixture of rustic and refined, of nature and man-made. Also of interest are the construction details: the intention to illustrate how the materials and assemblies respond to and work with the natural force of gravity. The house ultimately illustrates through its siting, architecture, and materials how man coincides with nature.

---

<sup>22</sup> Kroloff, Reed, Architecture (May, 1996), 241.



**Figure 36: Precedent 5 – Exterior view of cabin**

Image illustrates combination of rustic (logs, stone) and refined (windows, finished wood) architecture. Image also illustrates merging of building into natural context; the woods and hillside surround the building; the building is not an object in this landscape as much as it is an extension of it.

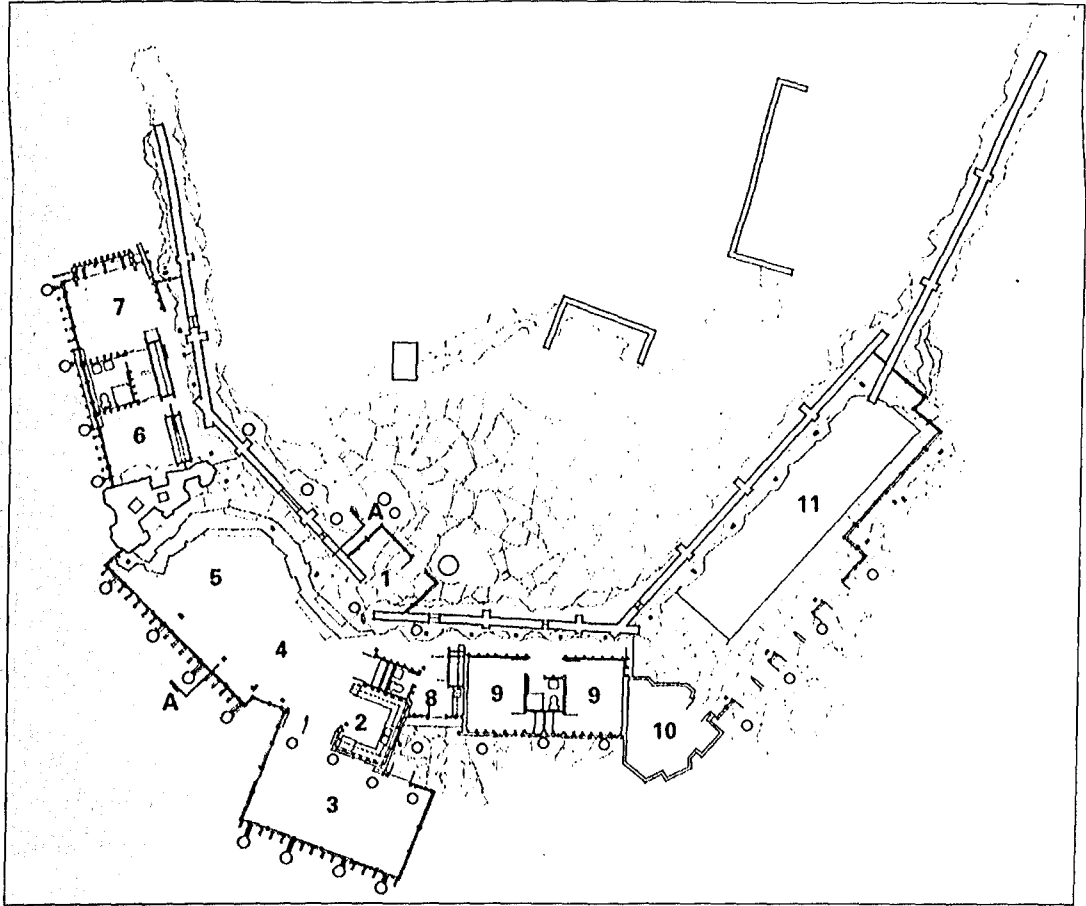
(Kroloff, Reed, Architecture (May, 1996))



**Figure 37: Precedent 5 – Interior view of cabin**

This image illustrates the combination of rustic (logs, stone) and refined (windows, finished wood) architecture. The two material approaches are juxtaposed in a style that is not jarring; a successful integration and transition is demonstrated.

(Kroloff, Reed, Architecture (May, 1996))

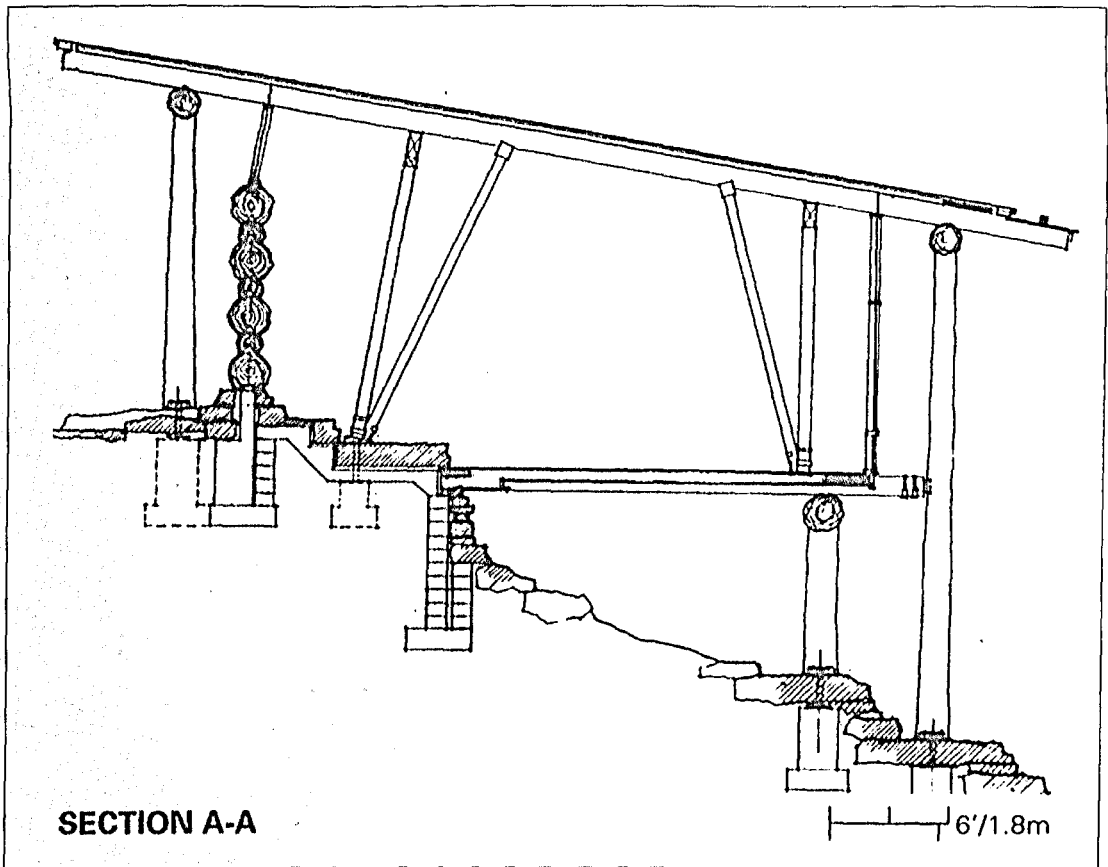


**Figure 38: Precedent 5 – Ground Floor Plan**

1. Entrance
2. Kitchen
3. Screened Porch
4. Dining Room
5. Living Area
6. Study
7. Master Bedroom
8. Service
9. Bedroom
10. Mechanical
11. Pool

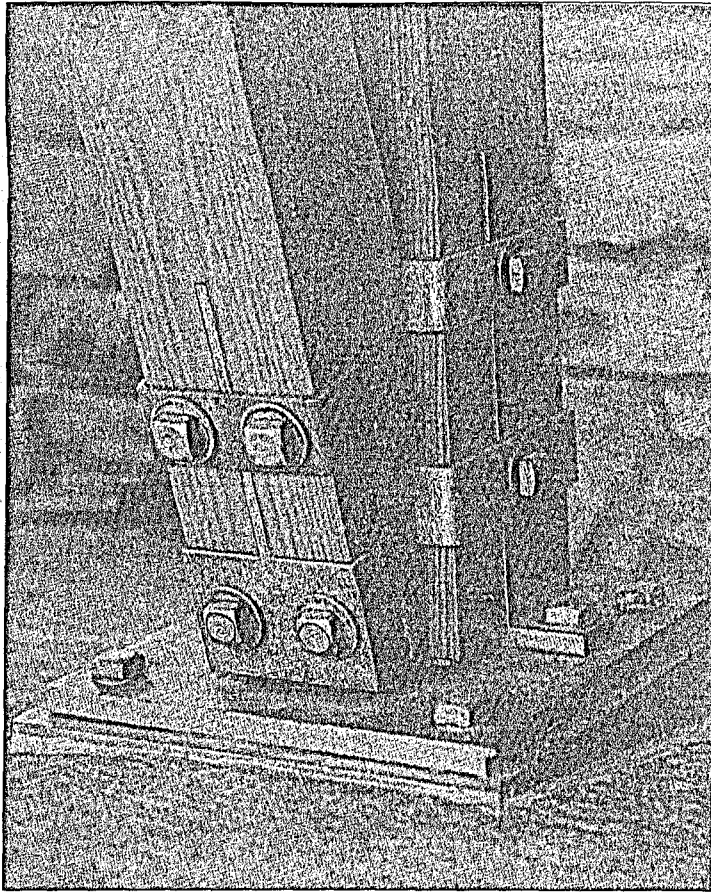
This plan illustrates the break down of building program into rooms organized around a large rock outcropping. The building responds to the landscape by surrounding a natural object feature instead of becoming an object on the raised platform of the outcropping.

(Kroloff, Reed, Architecture (May, 1996))



**Figure 39: Precedent 5 – Section through living area**

This section illustrates the juxtaposition 'natural' and 'man-made' materials (logs, stone, lumber, steel, and glass) in the design of the cabin. Unfortunately, this section does not illustrate the relationship of this room to the large rock outcropping to the left of the stacked log wall, information which would describe the building's relationship to the natural materials and massing of the site. One can deduce in this section, however, how the architecture of the building responds to the hillside. Where the room is built into the rock outcropping, the materials are more rustic than at the right of the drawing where the room is farther from the ground and the materials are more refined. There is a correspondence between the architecture, the site, and the materials. (Kroloff, Reed, Architecture (May, 1996))



**Figure 40: Precedent 5 – View of column base plate assembly**

Although verging on the obsessive, the details of this building are structurally explicative and poetic in their use of wood and steel. This use of these two materials can be interpreted as a further expression of 'natural' and 'man-made' although both materials can be seen as refined. Of particular interest is the architect's assertion of the laws of gravity in building into the architecture of the cabin. Finally, the placement of this simple, yet refined and intentionally crafted, assembly upon the raw character of the rock ledge is an interesting juxtaposition. (Kroloff, Reed, Architecture (May, 1996))



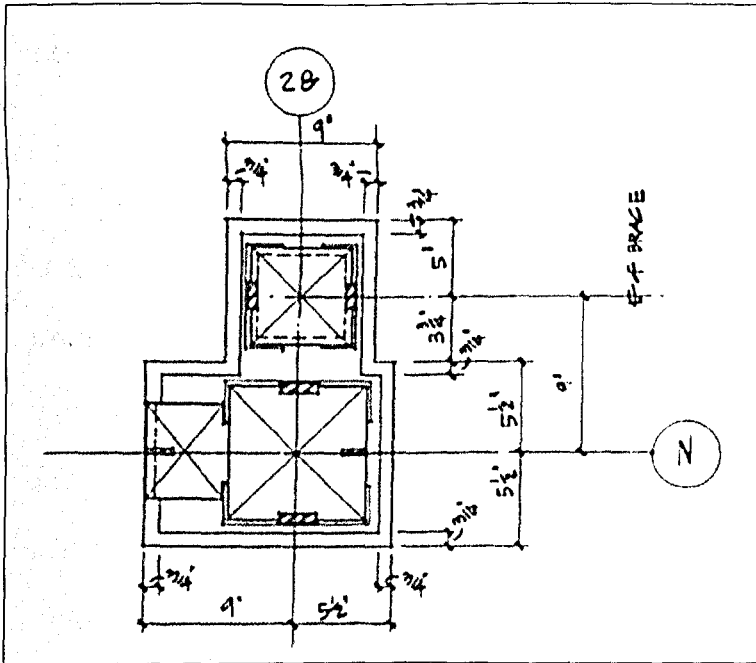


Figure 41: Precedent 5 – Plan of column base  
(Kroloff, Reed, Architecture (May, 1996))

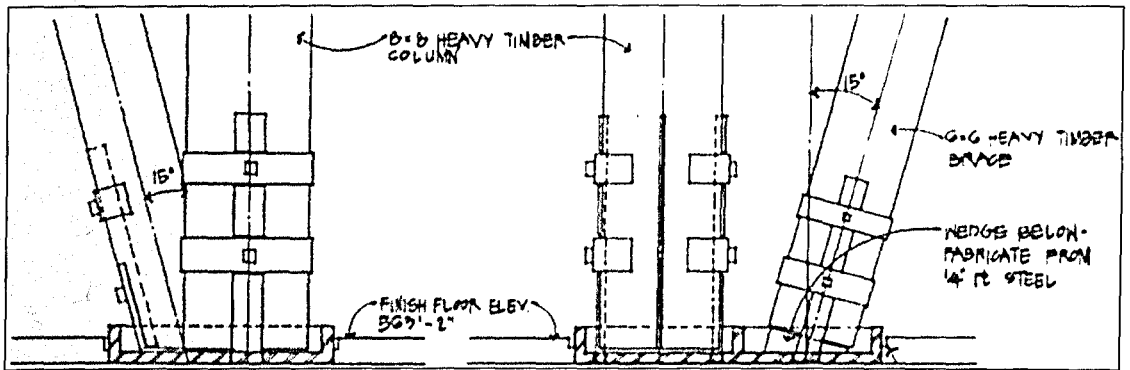
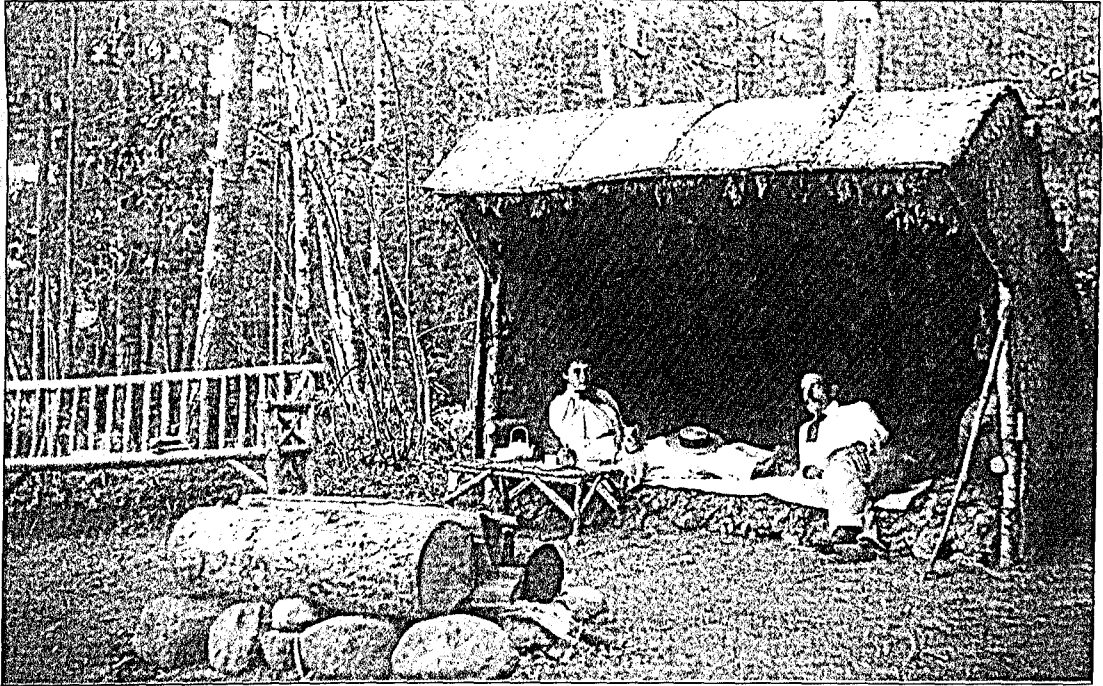


Figure 42: Precedent 5 – Elevation of column base  
(Kroloff, Reed, Architecture (May, 1996))

## Precedent 6: Adirondack Camp Architecture

Within the Adirondack Park region is a diverse assortment of camp buildings which vary widely in their degree of rusticity and siting. Indeed, these buildings have few characteristics in common; one is their use of similar materials, wood, usually from the local surrounding forest, and granite in any stone work. Additionally, all of these structures have some kind of porch or transition space from interior to exterior. On the following pages are several images which illustrate the breadth of camp architecture style and make special note of porch architecture.



**Figure 43: Precedent 6 – Lean-to structure, 1893**

This image illustrates a developed version of the lean-to, a rustic structure common to early open (not permanent) camps in the region. This developed one was a typical accessory of permanent camps. This one shows a platform to raise the floor of the lean-to off the ground and a roof which extends beyond the platform suggesting a transition zone to the space outside the lean-to, although not actually a porch. (Gilborn, Craig, Adirondack Camps: Homes Away from Home, 1850-1950 (Syracuse University Press, 2000) 43-45)



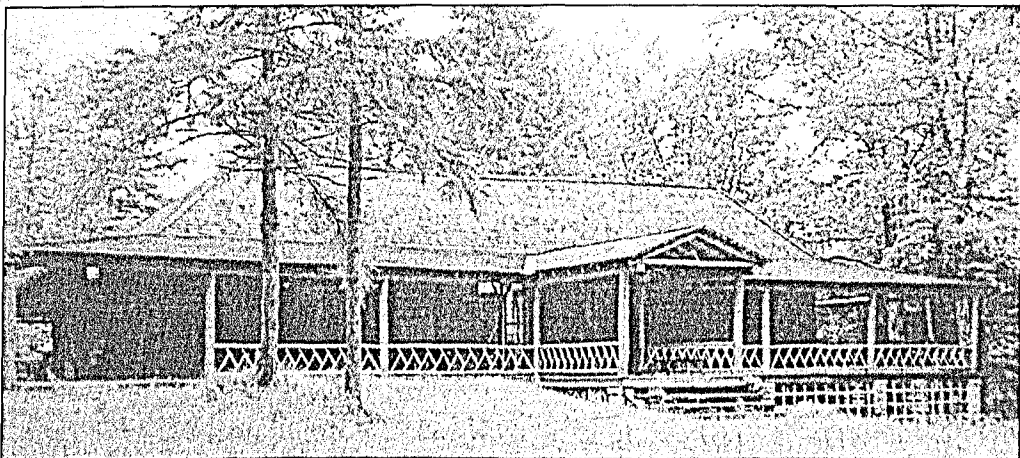
**Figure 44: Precedent 6 – platform tent, late 1800's**

This image illustrates a split level platform tent; the back part is enclosed and the front part is a porch. (Gilborn, Craig, Adirondack Camps: Homes Away from Home, 1850-1950 (Syracuse University Press, 2000) 150)



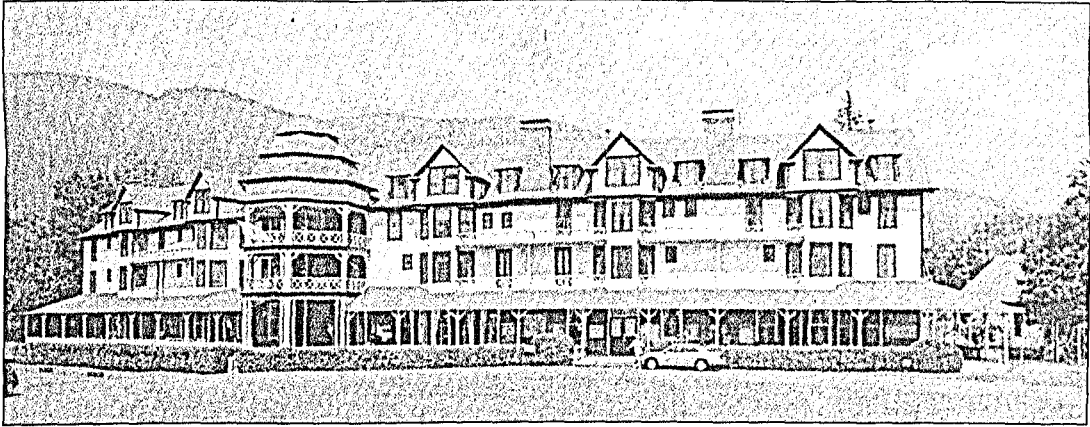
**Figure 45: Precedent 6 – log cabin, Raquette Lake, 1984**

This log cabin is a *Stabbur*, a traditional Norwegian farm building. The upper room, for sleeping, is reached through a trap door in the ceiling of the sitting room below. The upper room overhangs providing a subtle porch roof at the front stoop. (Gilborn, Craig, Adirondack Camps: Homes Away from Home, 1850-1950 (Syracuse University Press, 2000) 92)



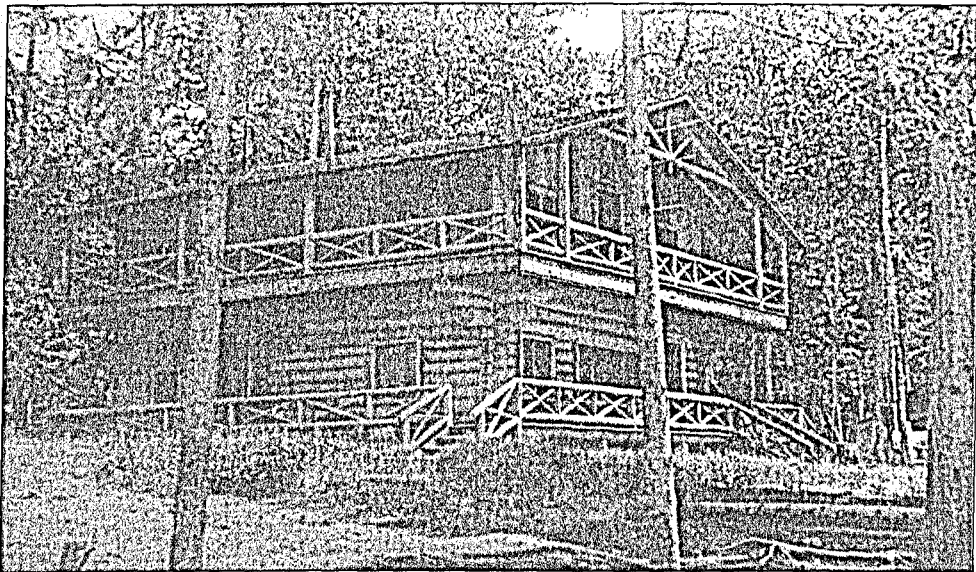
**Figure 46: Precedent 6 – Adirondack League Club, Bisby Lake, 1988**

Extensive and deep porches wrap this building on three sides. (Gilborn, Craig, Adirondack Camps: Homes Away from Home, 1850-1950 (Syracuse University Press, 2000) 268)



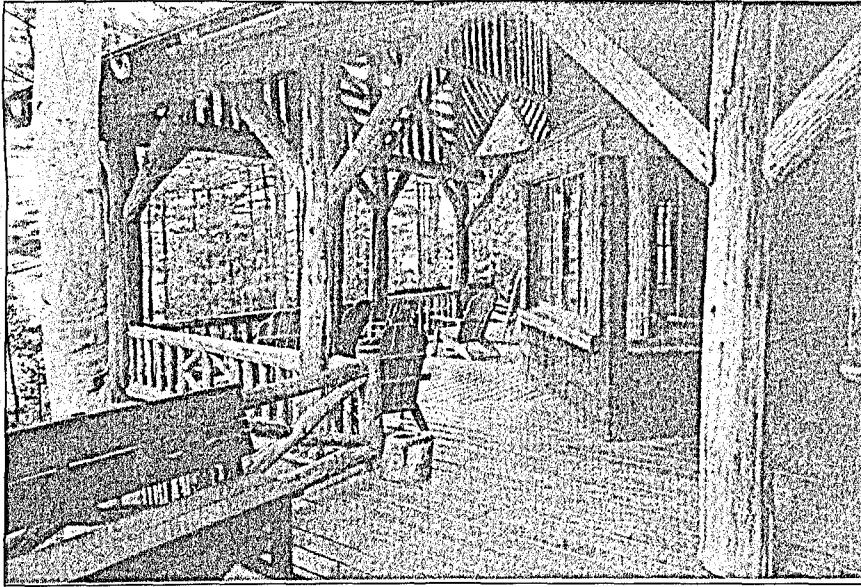
**Figure 47: Precedent 6 – Ausable Clubhouse, Ausable Lake, 1890**

This clubhouse, although refined in character compared to the more typical rustic structures of the region, still has shallow porches/balconies on all floors but in the garret (which was usually for servants). (Gilborn, Craig, Adirondack Camps: Homes Away from Home, 1850-1950 (Syracuse University Press, 2000) 103)



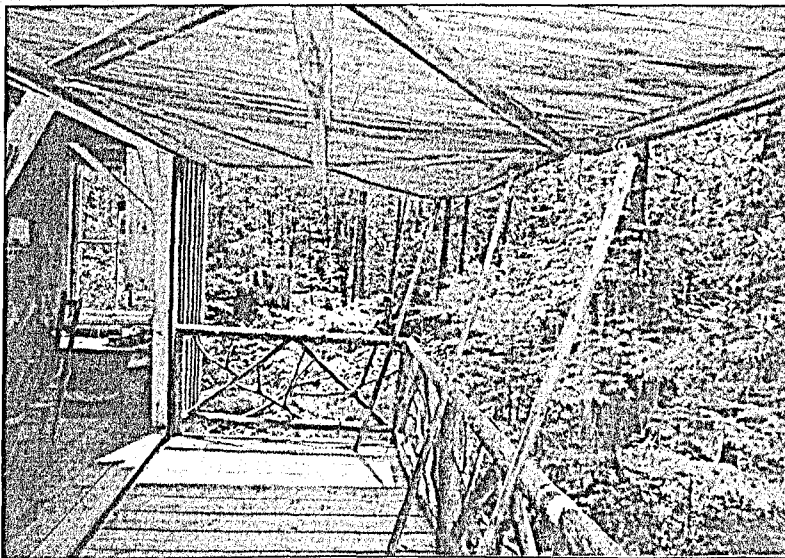
**Figure 48: Precedent 6 – Swiss Cottage, Camp Pine Knot, 1883**

Camp Pine Knot was admired for its rustic architecture and ambience. This image illustrates one of the buildings at the Camp. Note the wrap around shallow porches/balconies. (Gilborn, Craig, Adirondack Camps: Homes Away from Home, 1850-1950 (Syracuse University Press, 2000) 127)



**Figure 49: Precedent 6 – View of porch, Eagle Island Camp**

This porch includes a clerestory, characteristics found at the main building at Camp Santanoni located near the thesis site. The clerestory was to help bring light into the rooms in the building. (Gilborn, Craig, Adirondack Camps: Homes Away from Home, 1850-1950 (Syracuse University Press, 2000) 245)



**Figure 50: Precedent 6 – Putnam Camp porch, late 1800's**

The wall of a community room flips up to become the cover over the porch. (Gilborn, Craig, Adirondack Camps: Homes Away from Home, 1850-1950 (Syracuse University Press, 2000) 140)





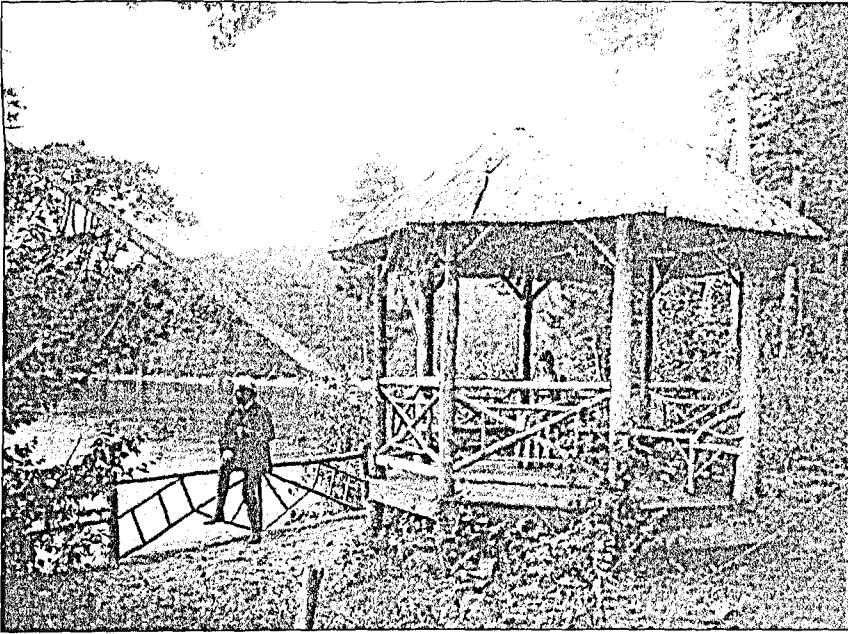
**Figure 51: Precedent 6 – covered walk, Camp Kwenogamac, 1904**



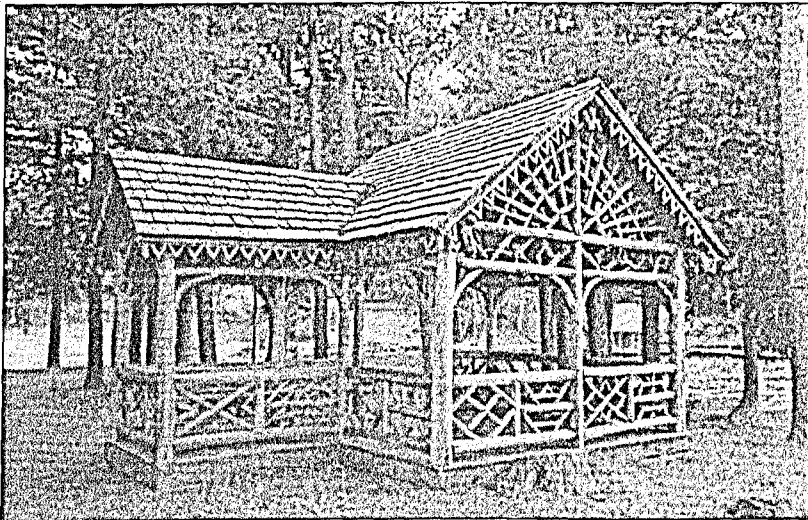
**Figure 52: Precedent 6 – covered walk, Read Camp, 1906**

This image and the one above illustrate the use of covered walks between camp buildings. These walks were typically employed to keep shoes free of mud in wet weather. (Gilborn, Craig, Adirondack Camps: Homes Away from Home, 1850-1950 (Syracuse University Press, 2000) 199)





**Figure 53: Precedent 6 – Gazebo, c. 1890**



**Figure 54: Precedent 6 – Summer house, Lake George, c. 1910**

This image as well as the one above are of outdoor structures on the grounds of some of the decorated camps in the Adirondacks. They are rustic, although embellished with “twiggy brackets.” These structures were typically sited on the edge of a lake or at the end of peninsula to catch breezes and views. (Gilborn, Craig, Adirondack Camps: Homes Away from Home, 1850-1950 (Syracuse University Press, 2000) 198)

## Program

*Blooming writers really do not know what to expect when they sign up for a workshop or creative-writing class. Some want to learn to write, or to write better. Others have been writing a great deal for a long time and want some feedback. These are realistic goals. A certain kind of person finds writing classes and workshops to be like camp, and just wants to hang out with all these other people, maybe with a writer he or she respects, to get and give response and encouragement, and to hear how other people tell their stories.*

Anne Lamott<sup>23</sup>

A successful workshop similar to the Writers Retreat this thesis proposes is the Lighthouse Writers Workshop, an independent creative writing school in Denver, Colorado which hosts 6 to 8 week-long retreats at a lodge in the Rocky Mountains. Daytime hours at the retreat are filled with morning and afternoon writing workshops and evenings are dedicated to poetry and fiction readings. Participants are encouraged to go on hikes, swim, and canoe as well. Veteran Lighthouse participant Mary Morrow comments, "Nature, that neutral and powerful force, was the background and foundation of our experiences at Grand Lake. No matter what the colors or how diverse they were, how loud the sounds of the water and wind, how pungent the scents, the natural world was calming, strengthening, and comforting in its utter detachment from human folly."<sup>24</sup>

The Lighthouse Writers Workshop as well as several other writing studios inspired the program of the Writer's Retreat outlined on the next several pages.

---

<sup>23</sup> Lamott, Anne, Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life, (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1994) 152.

<sup>24</sup> [www.lighthousewriters.com/retreat.htm](http://www.lighthousewriters.com/retreat.htm)

## Workshop Schedule

The Retreat will be open from the end of April through the end of October, running three to six weeks workshops throughout the season. Workshop participants will attend classes half of the day with the other half of the day free for writing either in a computer lab or in a private cabin or for enjoying the outdoors. All meals will take place in a central dining hall; no kitchen facilities are provided with the living accommodations for the participants. Evenings will have optional activities including readings, guest lectures, movies, and games.

## Course Descriptions

Attendance is limited to 10 people in each course with four courses running each workshop. Students only attend one course per workshop session. A variety of courses will be offered for both advanced and beginning writers. A list of courses developed from a variety of different workshop curriculums follows.

### *Nature Writing Workshop*

This workshop focuses on writing about the local scenery and a writer's place alongside it. Both prose writers and poets are welcome to learn from each other's interpretations of the natural world. A short survey on nature writing in the U.S. will be incorporated into this workshop.

### *Creative Writing Workshop*

This group helps members develop confidence in their writing and introduces the important elements of finished pieces, such as tension, character development, description, and dialogue. The focus is on writing and enjoying the process.

### *Novel Workshop*

This workshop concentrates on critique of participant writing and includes weekly discussions and exercises devoted to elements of book-length fictional works.

This workshop is ideal for those already working on a novel, or for those just thinking about it.

### *Poetry Workshop*

An introductory-to-intermediate workshop that incorporates freewriting, member critiques, and discussions of craft—including meter, rhythm, metaphor, image, clarity, and poetry in form. This workshop is a good place to start for beginning poets who probably read more poetry than they write, but want to write more.

### *Advanced Poetry Workshop*

This workshop concentrates on poetry critiques and engages members in advanced concepts of the form. Members should have an extensive knowledge of basic poetic elements and a solid reading knowledge of contemporary poetry. Permission of facilitator panel required.

### *Writing the Short Story*

The dramatic elements of the short story are distinct from any other form of fiction. This eight-week workshop is for writers who wish to begin or further their study of the contemporary short story form, and to apply their learning to their own projects. Participants will focus equally on reading published works and writing/revising original short stories, as well as discussing aspects of publishing. Weekly writing exercises, readings, and workshops of peer stories will be combined to provide the most direct, effective training in this dynamic form.

### *Creative Nonfiction*

Explore the many forms of creative nonfiction, such as personal essay, memoir, and literary journalism. Group discussions center on the issue of truth versus fiction, the fallibility of memory, and the development of a strong voice. The sessions will allow for limited critiquing. More advanced essayists should consider the Memoir and Personal Essay workshop.

### *Intermediate-Advanced Short Story and Essay Workshop*

A weekly workshop for intermediate to advanced writers of all prose styles (essay and short story). Writers of longer works are welcome, but the focus is on self-contained chapters and stories. The sessions concentrate on critique of member submissions and include writing exercises and discussion of published works as models of craft.

### *Nonfiction Writing Workshop*

Sessions concentrate on creative writing techniques common to all types of nonfiction writing. This workshop also covers specific forms of nonfiction, how to utilize fictional devices, as well as issues pertaining to the writing life (marketing, creativity, etc.).

### *Screenwriting Workshop*

A great place to practice the craft of screenwriting through six weeks of lectures,

exercises, screenings, discussions and workshops. Topics include screenplay format, story ideas and structure, character development, dialogue, adaptation, and the writing process. All participants will apply the most effective and up-to-date techniques to develop, structure and begin the first draft of a feature-length screenplay. In addition, members will submit screenplay drafts for critical feedback on a regular basis.

### Workshop Publication

Besides hosting courses and an opportunity to retreat into nature, the workshop also publishes an annual poetry and prose journal called Marrow as well as a newsletter sent to all veteran workshop attendees. The publication is meant to advertise both the workshop and the writers who attend; all of the submissions will be developed from workshop writing.

## Program Elements: Written Description

*Poetry arrived  
in search of me. I don't know, I don't know where  
it came from, from winter or a river.  
I don't know how or when.*  
Pablo Neruda<sup>25</sup>

### **Exterior Spaces and Site Development**

Hiking trails, a beach for swimming, a boat dock and house, a grounds maintenance shed, and an outdoor lecture space for readings and guest lectures will be developed on the site. There will also be exterior spaces on decks or porches which will be associated with certain public spaces at the Retreat. A parking lot for staff and deliveries (ten spaces) will be located within a five minute walk of the 'campus.' Students will arrive by bus to Newcomb and then be retrieved by the Workshop in two vans.

### **Living Areas**

The living areas of the Writer's Retreat will allow forty participants to have the option of experiencing solitude or experiencing a residential community.

Participants have the opportunity to live in sleeping cabins which have two single rooms with separate entrances or dormitories for up to 8 people. Two central bathroom facilities will be within the living area. The private sleeping cabins will have a small desk area for private writing. The dormitories will essentially be

---

<sup>25</sup> [www.naturewriting.com](http://www.naturewriting.com)

sleeping quarters; no office spaces or commons will be developed into the dormitory plans.

The living areas for the director, the teachers, guest speakers, and staff will be more substantial living accommodations. The director will have a four bedroom house, including guest bedrooms for visiting faculty. The full time faculty will share a house. The staff and cook will share a house. The houses will have sleeping, living, and eating facilities.

### **Administrative Spaces**

Offices for the director, staff, and faculty, a conference room, publication preparation room, bookstore, bathrooms, and a multipurpose room will be integrated into one building housing administrative spaces. These spaces should be within easy walking distance of the classroom facility.

### **Classroom Spaces**

Four indoor and one outdoor classrooms will be housed in one central teaching facility. This building will also have bathrooms for students and teachers.

### **Lounge and Lab Facility**

A writer's lounge with associated exterior space, a café, a computer lab, a small library, and exercise room for yoga and meditation will be integrated into one building. This facility will be the students' main writing and revising laboratory; it should provide comfortable places to concentrate on writing as well as provide spaces for students to meet one another and work on drafts together. This

facility should allow for the writers at the retreat to come together casually as a community.

### **Dining Facility**

The dining facility will have an associated exterior eating space, a kitchen, and a cook's office. Bathrooms will be provided if this building is at a great distance from the central WC facilities. This dining hall is the great meeting place for everyone at the retreat: faculty, students, and staff unite and share meals.



Program Elements: Tabulation

Space/Use	Area Required	Location	Notes
<b>EXTERIOR SPACES</b>			
Hiking Trails		w/in 4 mile radius	extend existing trails
Beach	800 sf	on lake	
Boat House/Dock	600 sf	near beach	
Shed	150 sf	near parking area	
Outdoor Lecture Space	1000 sf	Within ¼ mile of main facilities	Utilize natural slope, views of water
<b>LIVING AREAS</b>			
Dormitories (2) Total people: 16 (600 sf each)	1200 sf		Views into woods or to water
Sleeping cabins (12) Total people: 24 (400 sf each)	4800 sf		Views into woods or to water
Bathrooms (2) (400 sf each)	800 sf		
Director's House Includes 3 double rooms (500 sf), 2 WC's, living area (300 sf), kitchen/dining (150 sf), porch (200 sf) mechanical and storage (200 sf)	1350 sf	Separate from student living quarters; nearer main facilities	Views into woods or to water
Staff House Includes 4 double rooms (600 sf), 2 WC's, porch (200 sf), living area (400 sf), kitchen/dining (150 sf), mechanical and storage (200 sf)	1550 sf	Separate from student living quarters; nearer main facilities	Views into woods or to water

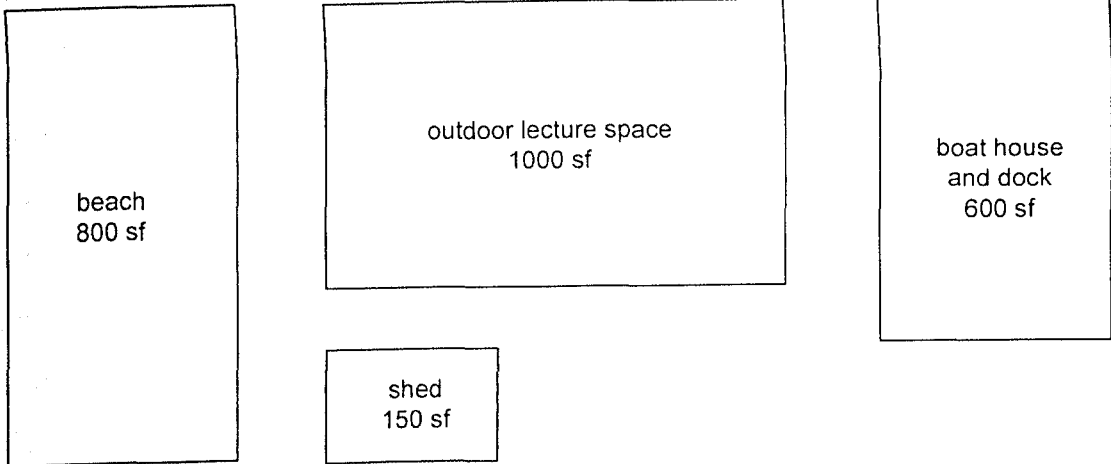
Faculty House Includes 4 double rooms (500 sf), 2 WC's, living area (300 sf), kitchen/dining (150 sf), porch (200 sf) mechanical and storage (200 sf)	1550 sf	Separate from student living quarters; nearer main facilities	Views into woods or to water
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING</b>			
Director's Office	150 sf	All offices will be located near one another	
Staff Office Total people: 4	400 sf	All offices will be located near one another	
Faculty Offices (3) (120 sf each)	360 sf	All offices will be located near one another	
Conference Room	400 sf	Centrally located within office area	
Publication Prep. Room	400 sf	Adjacent to office area	
Multipurpose Room	1500 sf	Near entry	Multimedia
Bookstore	500 sf	Near entry	
WC's	50 sf	Near entry	
<b>CLASSROOM BUILDING</b>			
Indoor classrooms (4) (400 sf each)	1600 sf		Views to water or into woods
Outdoor classroom	400 sf		Views to water or into woods
<b>LOUNGE AND LAB BUILDING</b>			
Writers lounge	600 sf		Views to water or into woods
Exterior space associated with lounge	400 sf		Views to water or into woods
Café	200 sf	Associated with lounge	
Computer Lab	800 sf		Views to woods; not sunny to prevent glare

Library	600 sf		Northern light
Exercise room	600 sf	Separate and private from lounge area	Views to water or into woods
<b>DINING BUILDING</b>			
Dining Hall	1500 sf		
Exterior space	800 sf	Adjacent main hall	
Kitchen	600 sf	Adjacent main hall	Service entrance
Cook's office	120 sf	Adjacent kitchen	
<b>Total</b>	<b>25780 sf</b>		

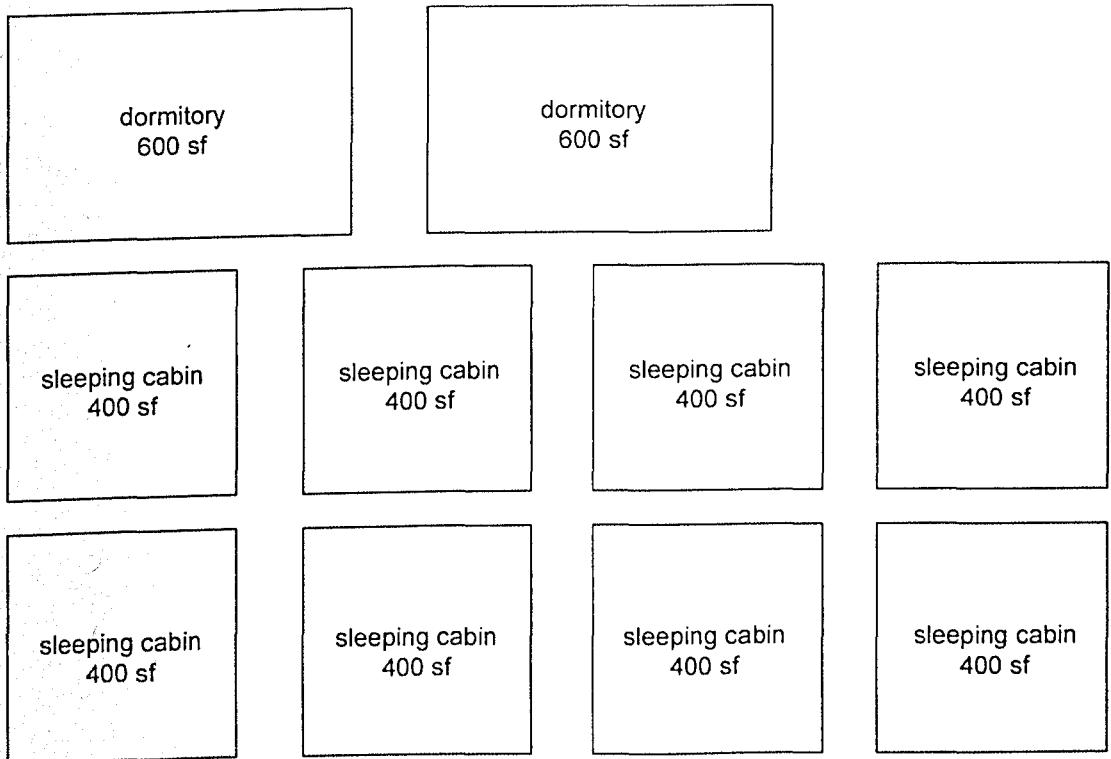
# Program Elements: Graphic Synopsis

(all spaces drawn at 1"=16')

## EXTERIOR SPACES

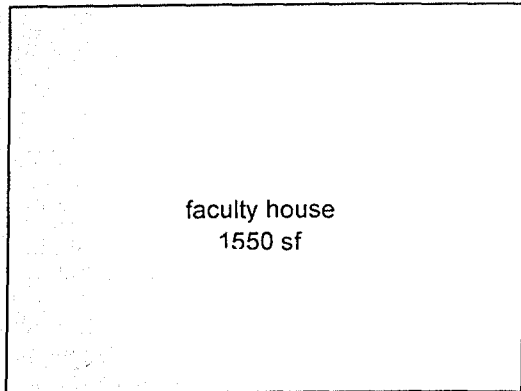
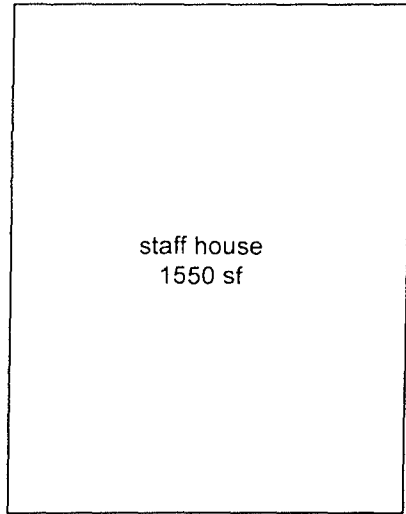
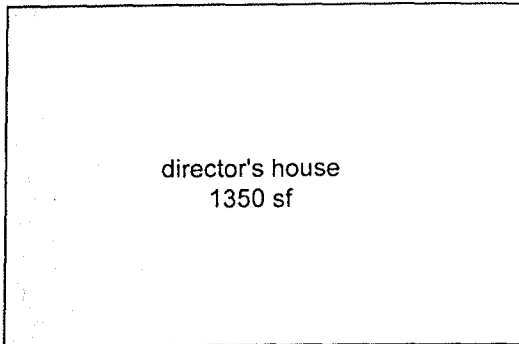
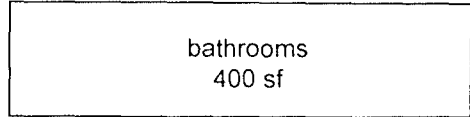
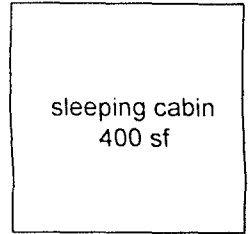
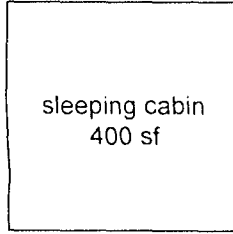
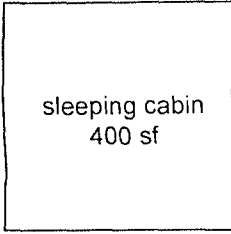
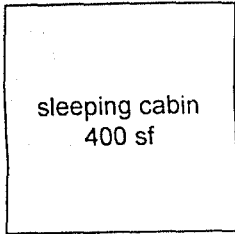


## LIVING AREAS



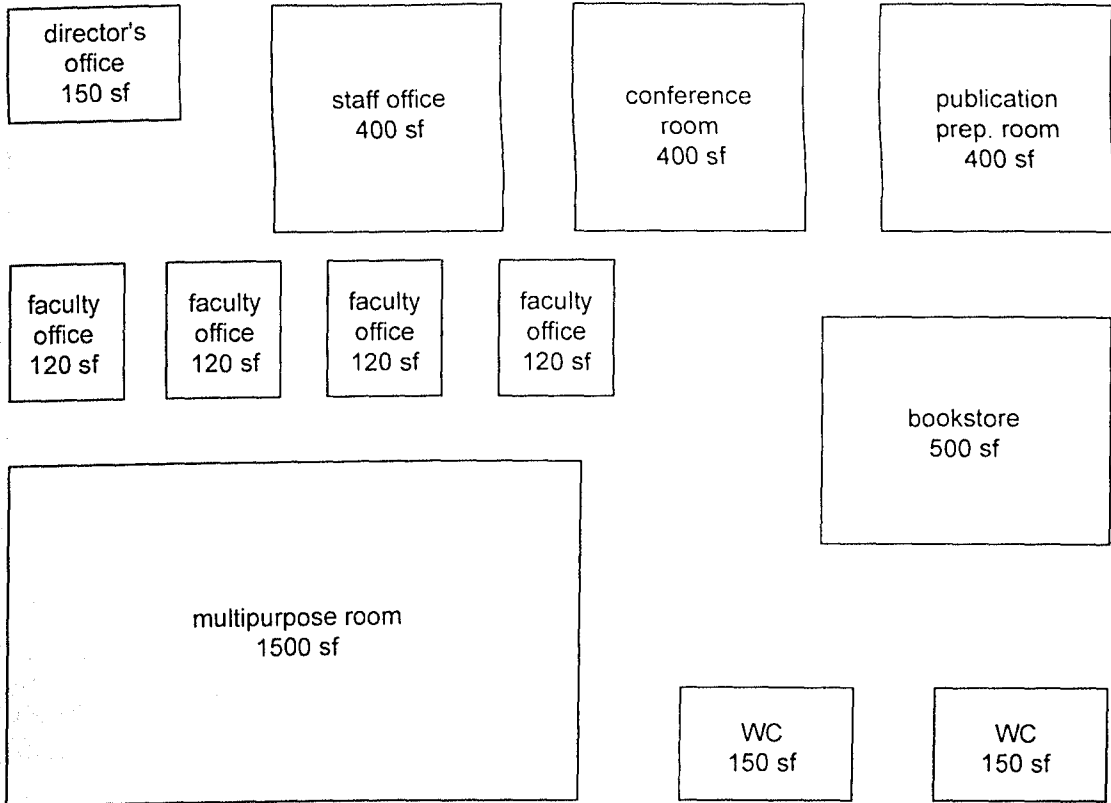
(all spaces drawn at 1"=16')

LIVING AREAS (CONTINUED)

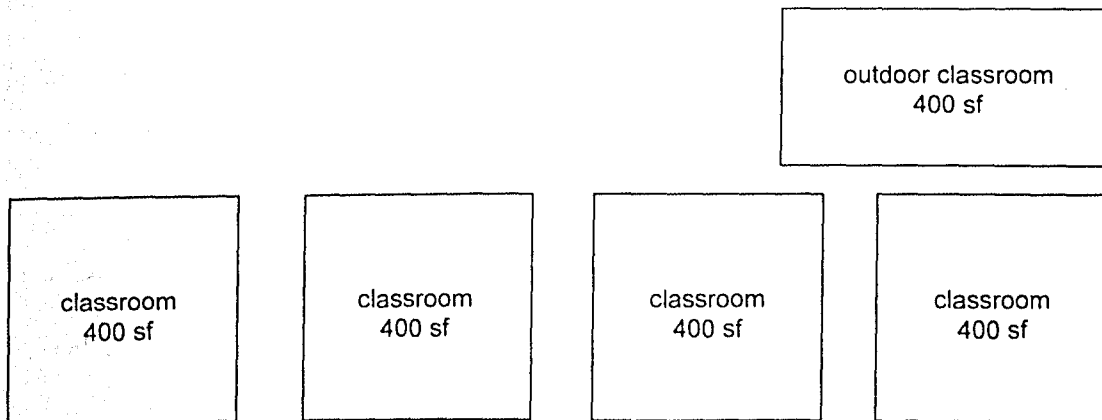


(all spaces drawn at 1"=16')

### ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING

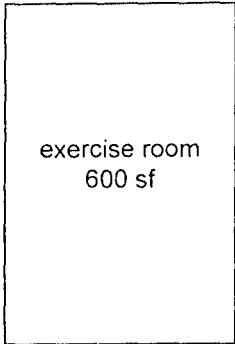
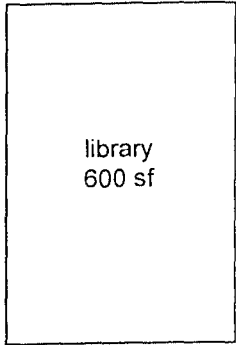
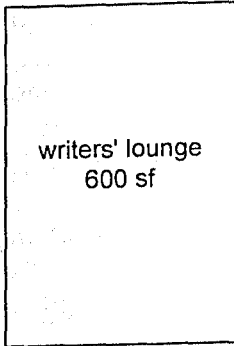
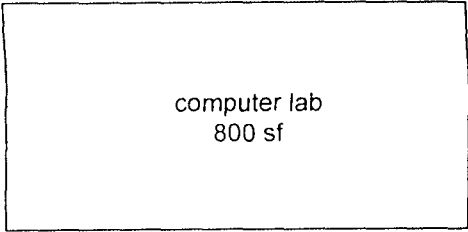
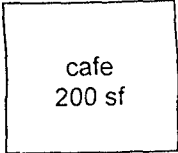
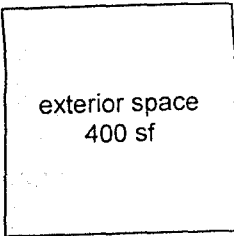


### CLASSROOM BUILDING

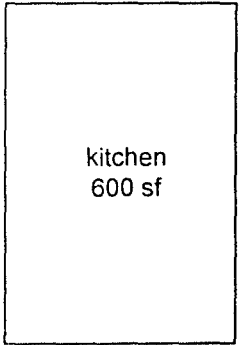
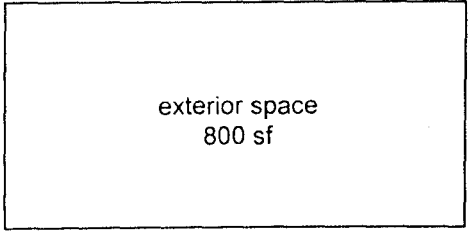
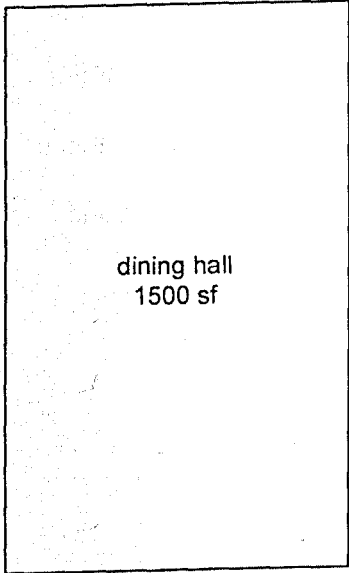


(all spaces drawn at 1"=16')

LOUNGE AND LAB BUILDING



DINING BUILDING



## Schemes

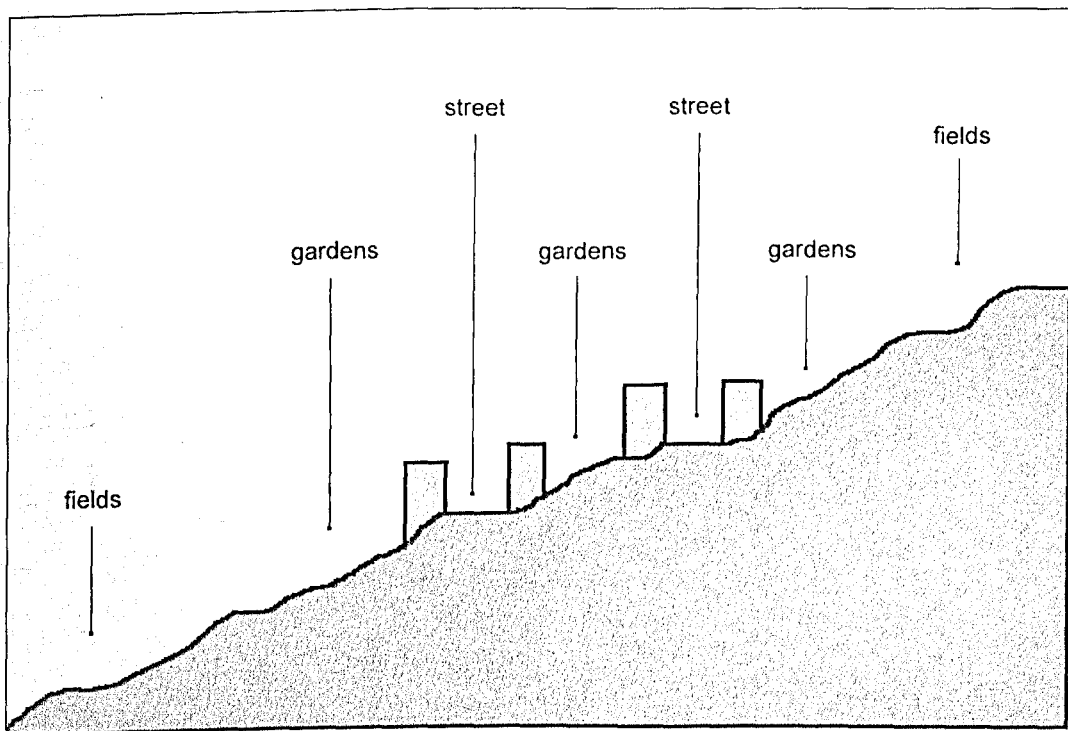
The schemes presented here are four of several which were developed. These four were selected for inclusion in this document because they vary by location and how they are sited.

It was decided during this early schematic design process that the most appropriate way to organize the program into buildings was to separate them by use. This decision inherently recognizes that the intentions of this thesis project to investigate a blurred boundary between built and natural and promote an intimate relationship with nature for inhabitants would not be met by conglomerating the program into one or two buildings. Further, schemes based on one or two masses on the land were decided against because such partis would likely not promote an experience of retreat and allow for the kind of isolation needed to focus on writing. Hence, the schemes which follow draw from the Barnes Camps presented in that they separate the program out into several buildings.



## Scheme 1: Waterford, VA

This scheme was developed with Waterford, Virginia in mind. Waterford, a town to the northwest of Leesburg, Virginia, is known for its quaint collection of 18<sup>th</sup>-century stone houses to tourists and for its linear diagram and dramatic section to urban designers. The town's two streets run parallel and across a hillside; the buildings cut into the hill. Gardens step up the slope behind the house. In Waterford, the views to the fields are an ever-present backdrop; one never feels removed from the natural scenery just beyond the town buildings.



**Figure 55: Scheme 1 – Waterford, VA section diagram**

Not to scale and diagrammed to illustrate relationship of paths, buildings, and field scenery.

Although an urban development and set within a domesticated landscape, Waterford's section diagram illustrates how two paths lined with buildings across a slope allow inhabitants constant visual engagement with the scenery of the landscape. They see it; they can enjoy it. The scheme developed on the site at Newcomb Lake uses a similar diagram to engage writers the same way.

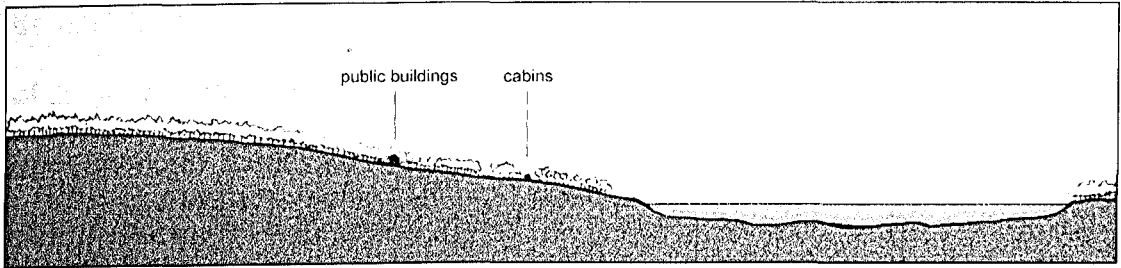


Figure 56: Scheme 1 – section

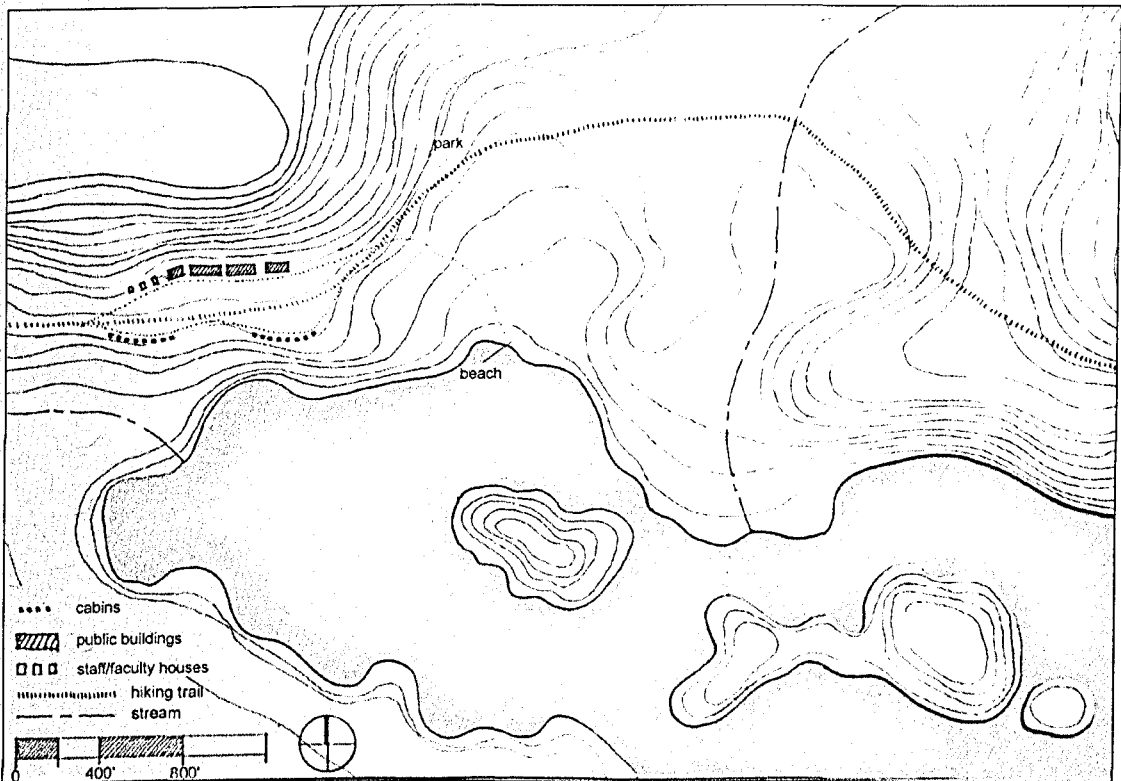


Figure 57: Scheme 1 – plan

In the Waterford Scheme, two paths follow the contours of the hillside branching from the existing hiking trail. The public buildings are located to the north merging into the hillside; the faculty houses are located off to the edge of this path. Cabins for the writers are located on the other path to the south. The path adjacent to the public buildings extends from the hiking trail and lead to a beach. Both sets of buildings will provide inhabitants with views to the water and of the surrounding mountainous forest landscape. Vehicle access to the site is from the north, extending existing Deerland Road.

## Scheme 2: On the Water

Although people may enjoy the beauty of and activities afforded by a lake without inhabiting buildings directly adjacent to the water, this scheme was developed with the purpose of justifying and more obviously celebrating the location of the Retreat near a lake. Currently there are ordinances in place which prohibit building within 200' of any water within Adirondack State Park, although there is a tradition among many camps to settle on water. This rule is being ignored by the author of this project so that the thesis intentions may be fully explored; this rule may be followed later in the process once an ecological approach to site intervention is developed.

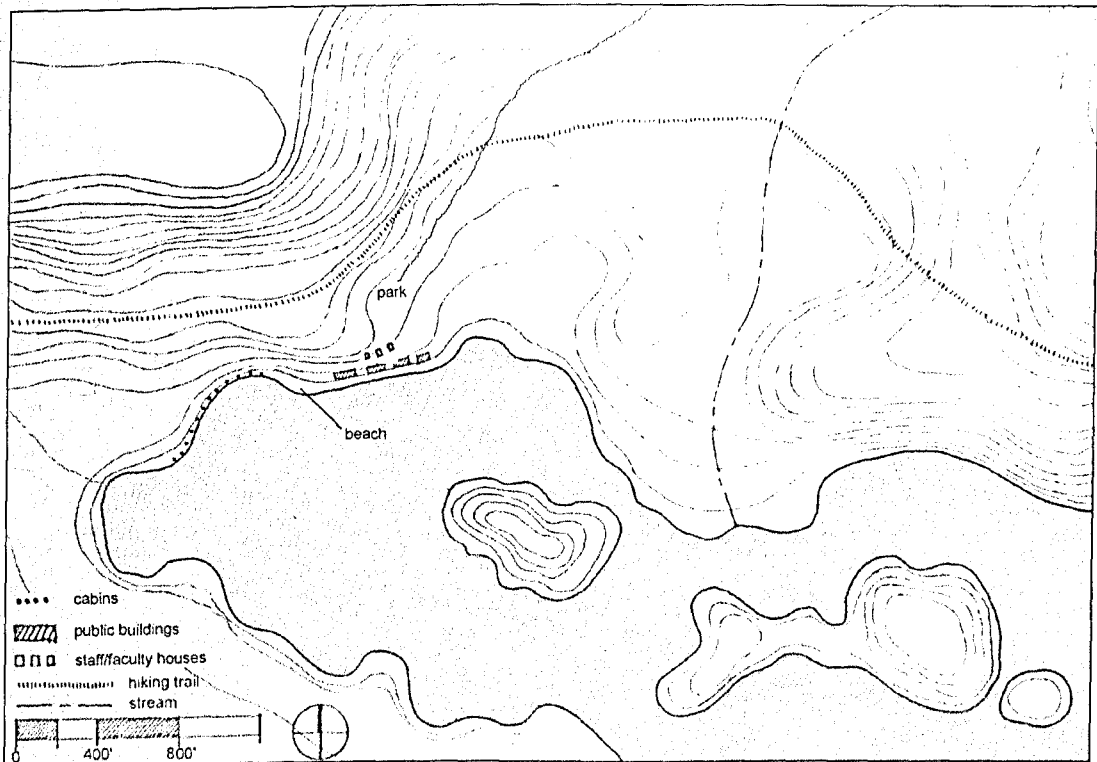
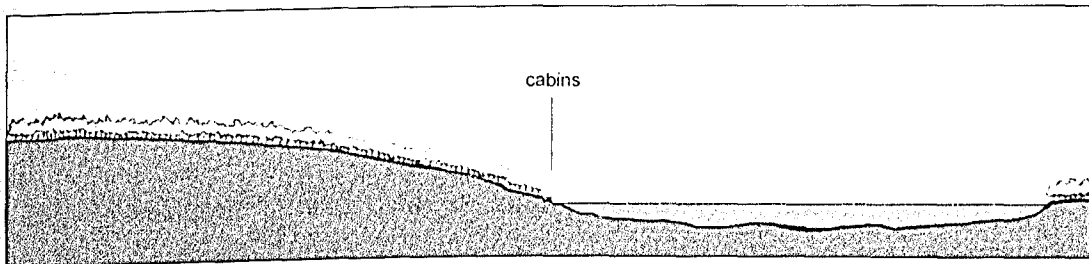


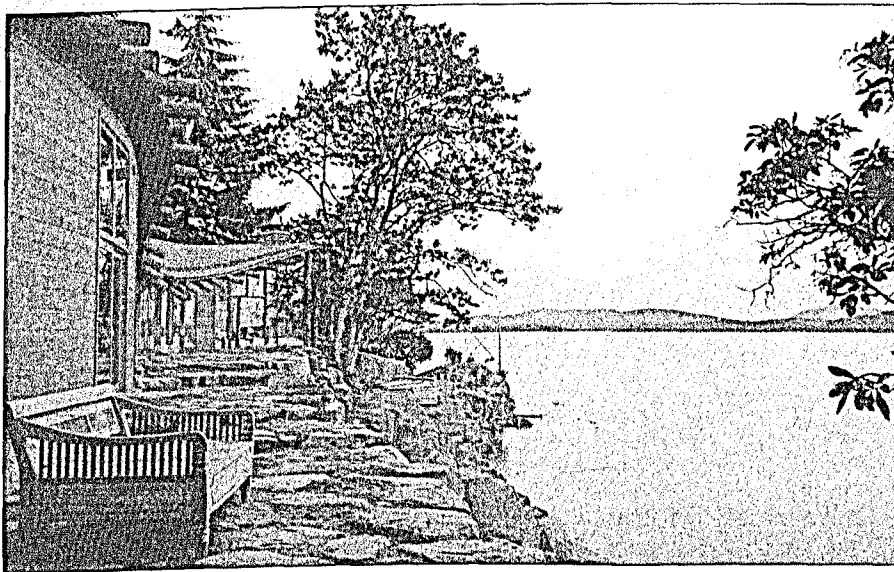
Figure 58: Scheme 2 – plan

Of all the schemes presented here, this scheme enjoys the most direct relationship with the water. One path follows the contour of the hillside; to the east are the public buildings with the faculty houses behind; to the West are the private cabins; a beach is accessed from the center of the path. This scheme would provide inhabitants with options as to their proximity to the public buildings and degree of privacy and retreat. The site is accessed from the north; an extension of Deerland Road will be made.



**Figure 59: Scheme 2 – section**

Not to scale. Section illustrates proximity of buildings to water.

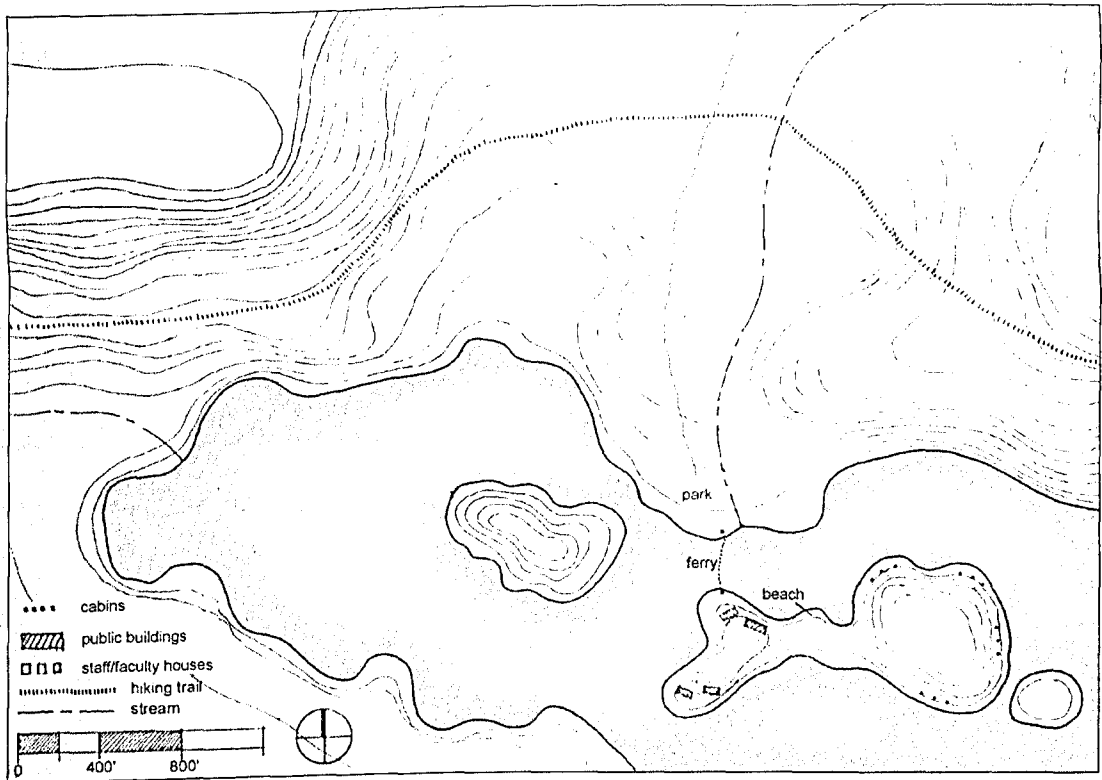


**Figure 60: Scheme 2 – Image to illustrate building/landscape relationship**

(Rowland, P., Weekend Houses (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2000) 138)

### Scheme 3: Island

Living on an island in the middle of a lake, surrounded by mountains and forest would create a fantastic sense of retreat for writers. The island would be accessed by ferry, a small boat used specifically for the Retreat. The ferry would dock on the public side of the island near the administrative building. All the public buildings are clustered on this part of the island. The private cabins are located at the other end of the island, approximately 1200' away from the public buildings. Although the public buildings and cabins are very close to the water, they cannot sit at the edge of the water because the slope doesn't allow for proper drainage (the area could become flooded during rains). A beach facing Mount Santanoni, the highest peak within view from the site, sits between the public and residential areas. From the north, Deerland Road will be extended to access the ferry landing.



**Figure 61: Scheme 3 – plan**

#### Scheme 4: In the Valley

This scheme is about living in a forest valley. Because the shape of the land is bowl shaped on the site, the valley floor is broad enough to fit the entire program spaced comfortably across it. This scheme would embrace the trees of the forest as the primary landscape with which to commune while in the buildings. The lake would primarily be enjoyed through active use; views to the water are obstructed by trees since the slope here is minimal.

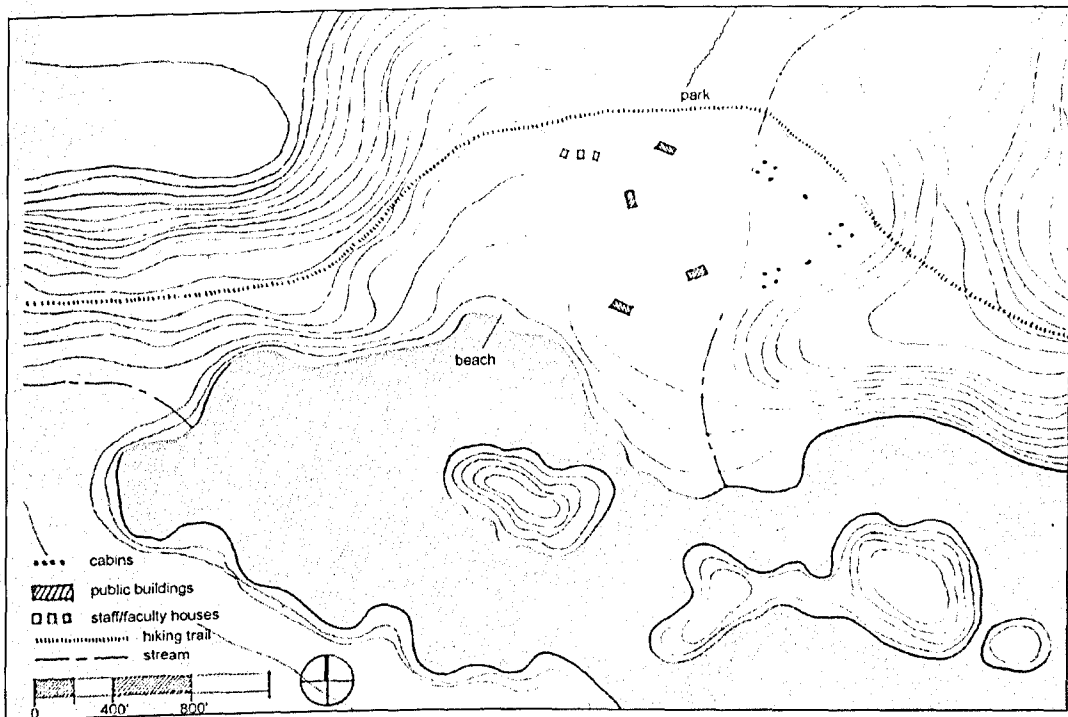
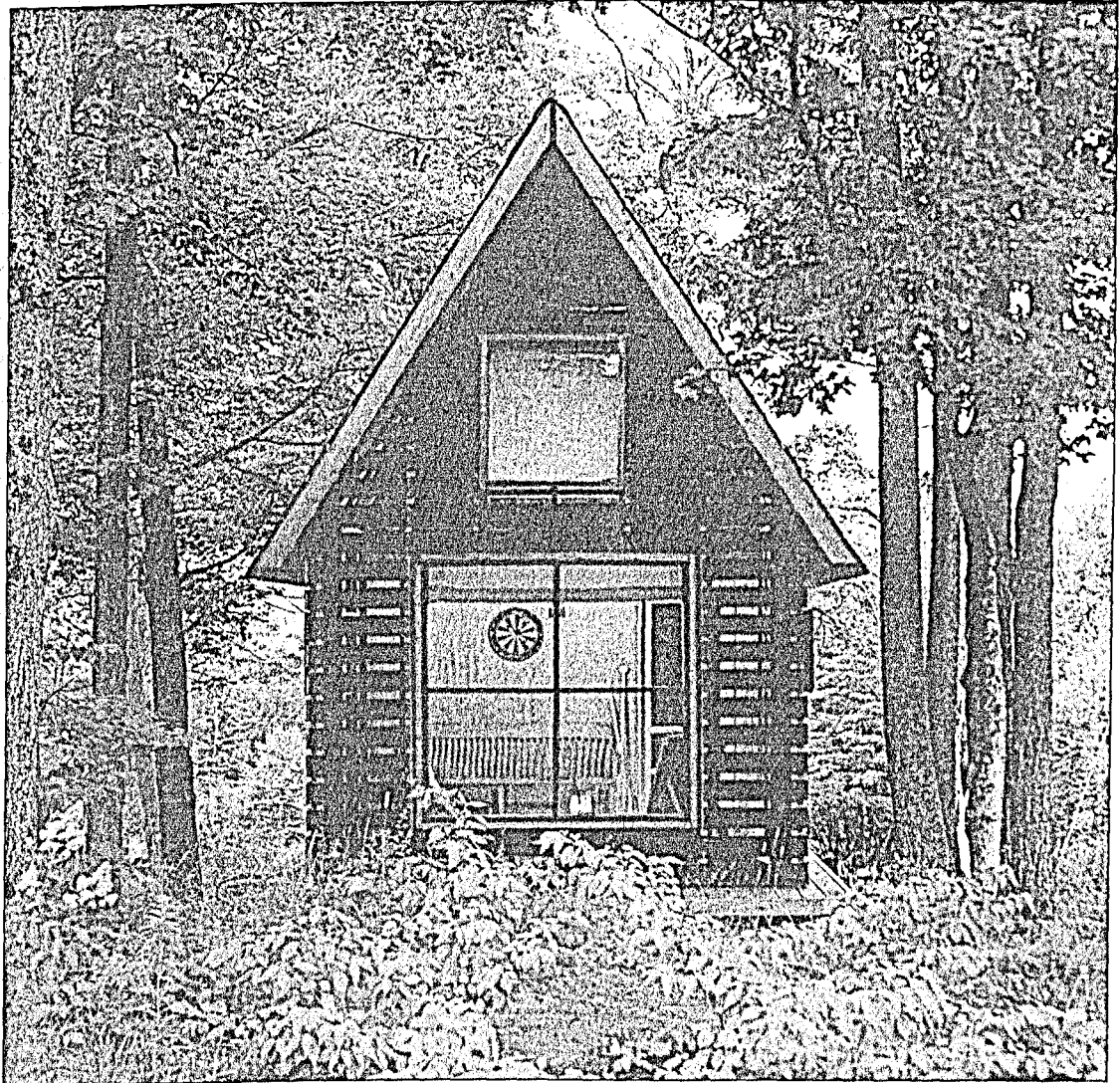


Figure 62: Scheme 4 – In the valley

This scheme uses existing Santanoni Brook to divide the public areas from the residential. Cabins are organized into clusters; small dormitories sit in between the clusters. All the living quarters are arranged with their back to the



slope; the thought behind this arrangement on the land is to provide a sense of privacy using the natural slope of the land, particularly the saddle to the Southeast of the residential area. The faculty houses are down the slope a bit to the west of the public buildings. A beach is located to the southeast of the public buildings.

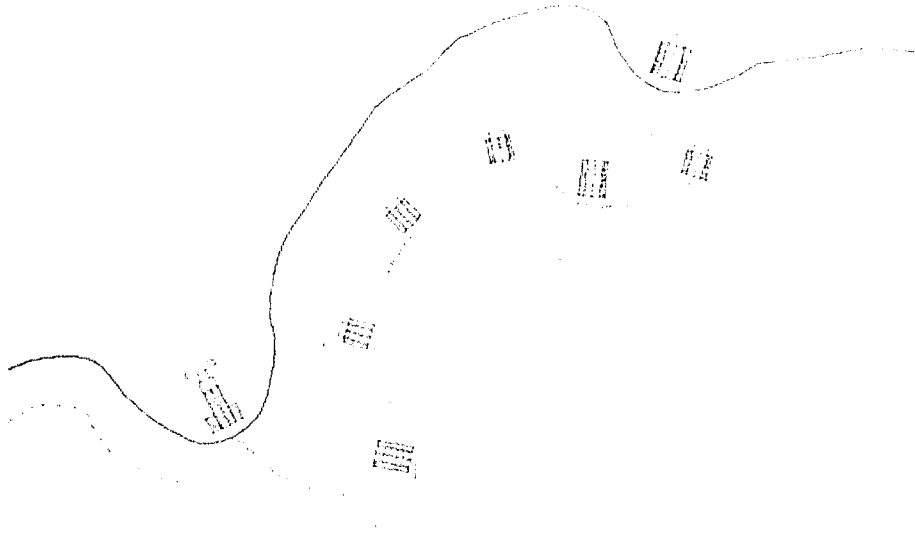


**Figure 63: Scheme 4 – Image illustrating building/landscape relationship**  
(Rowland, P., Weekend Houses (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2000) 27)

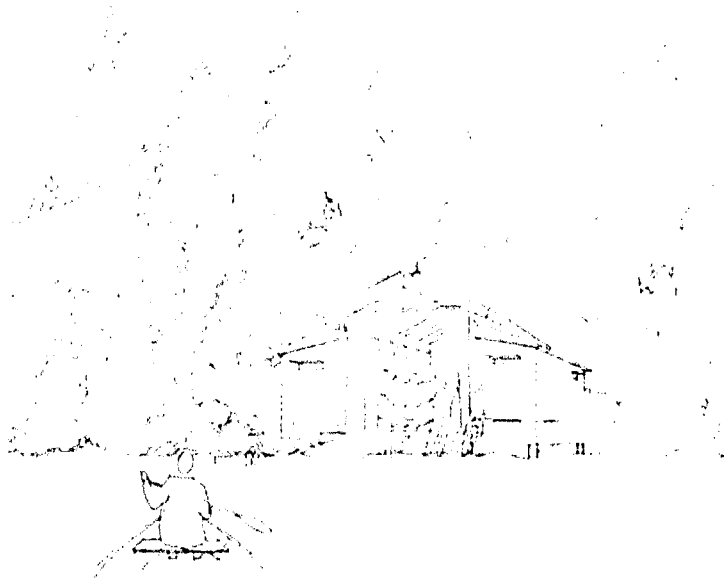
## Scheme Discussion

These schemes are site diagrams; they only begin to address the goals of this thesis project. Still, each of the four illustrate distinctly different ways of siting buildings within this landscape of forest, hills, and lake. It is likely that intentions need to be narrowed and described further, perhaps through some ecological approaches, before one of these sites will be selected for further design.

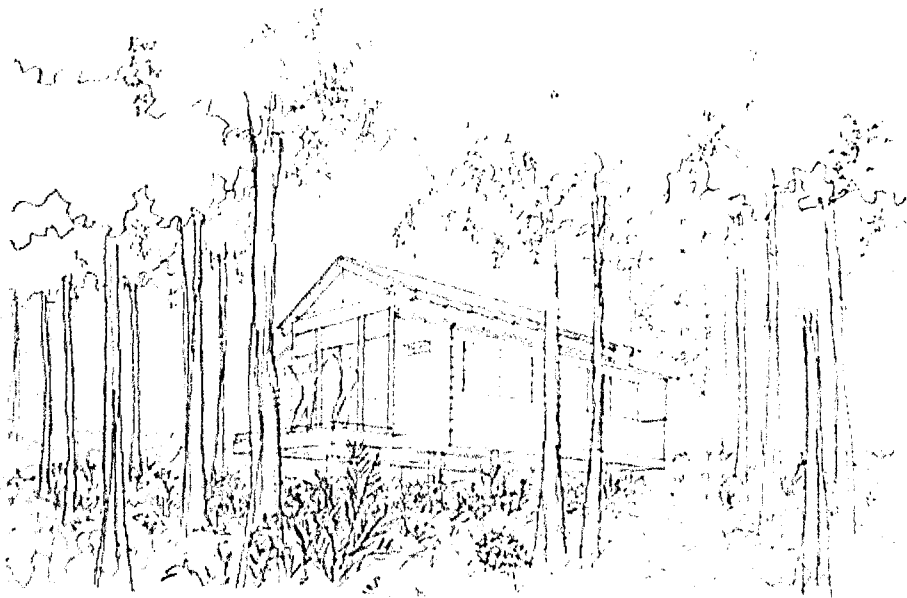
Although I have been somewhat sensitive to certain ecological issues about the site (drainage, sun, wind), I have intentionally left out an ecological paradigm in this discussion of the project thus far so that my philosophical intentions concerning the fostering of an intimate relationship between human habitation and nature would gel. I believe these philosophical ideas have solidified and intentions about how to settle in this landscape in an ecologically sensitive manner may be further explored. I assume this research will also help me approach the issue of building construction, another goal of this thesis project I have thus far only discussed philosophically through the precedent of the Bohlin cabin.



**Figure 64: Proposed site plan**



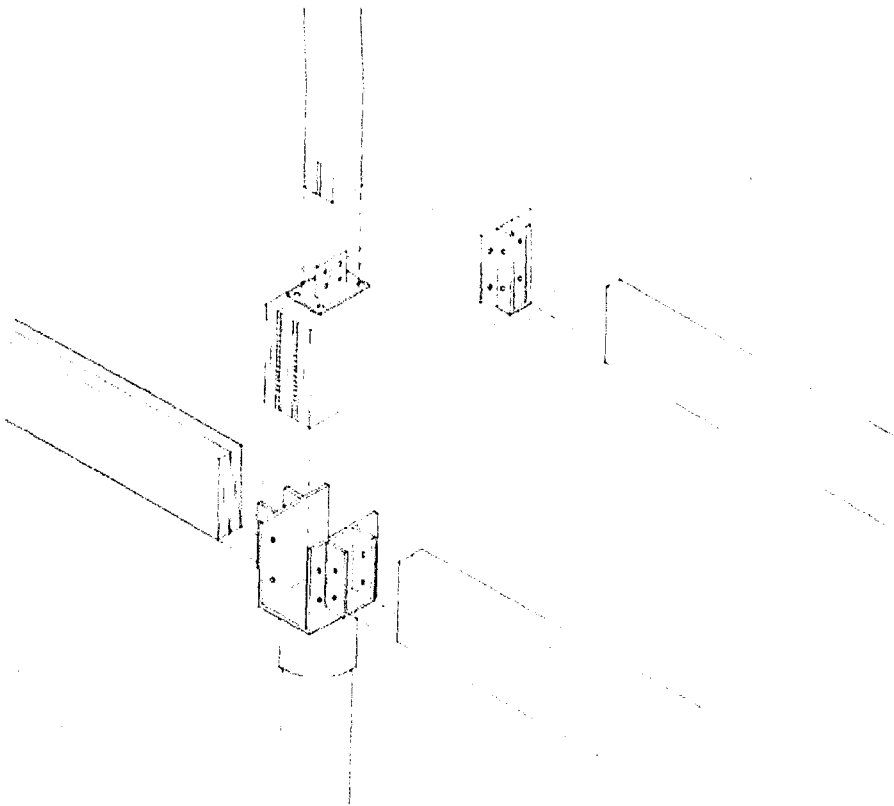
**Figure 65: Boathouse**



**Figure 66: Bunkhouse**



**Figure 67: Exploded axon dining building**



**Figure 68: Exploded axon connection**

## Bibliography

Abbey, Edward. The Journey Home. New York, NY: Peter Smith Publisher, 1993.

Adirondack Yesteryears: A Guide to Adirondack Historic Sites, Museums & Events Today. Adirondack Regional Tourism Council.

Architectural Forum. July 1962.

Barnes, Edward Larrabee. Edward Larrabee Barnes Architect. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1994.

Dupree, A. "On Retreat: Approaching the Heart of Writing." The Inkwel Newsletter. September/October, 2000.

Engel, Robert, Howard Kirschenbaum, and Paul Malo. Santanoni: From Japanese Temple to Life at an Adirondack Great Camp. New York: Adirondack Architectural Heritage, 2000.

Folwell, Elizabeth. The Adirondack Book: A Complete Guide. Stockbridge, MA: Berkshire House Publishers, 1992

Gilborn, Craig. Adirondack Camps: Homes Away from Home, 1850-1950. Syracuse University Press, 2000.

Henry, Michael. "The Workshop: When is it Enough?" The Inkwel Newsletter. January/February, 2001.

Kaiser, Harvey H. Great Camps of the Adirondacks. Boston: Godine Publisher, Inc., 1982.

Kroloff, Reed. Architecture. May, 1996.

Lamott, Anne. Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life. New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1994.

Microsoft Streets and Trips 2002 software.

Rowland, Penelope. Weekend Houses. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2000.  
Theroux, Paul. Fresh Air Fiend: Travel Writings. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2000.

Thomas, Owen, Ed. Walden and Civil Disobedience: Henry David Thoreau.  
New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1966.

[www.aarch.org](http://www.aarch.org)

[www.adirondacks.org/overview.shtml](http://www.adirondacks.org/overview.shtml)

[www.haystack-mtn.org/](http://www.haystack-mtn.org/)

[www.lighthousewriters.com/retreat.htm](http://www.lighthousewriters.com/retreat.htm)

[www.naturewriting.com](http://www.naturewriting.com)

[www.weather.com/weather/climatology/USNY1004](http://www.weather.com/weather/climatology/USNY1004)

Ylimaula, Anna-Maija. The Oulu School of Architecture: Towards a New  
Millenium. Helsinki: The Finnish Building Center Ltd., 1993.